VALLEY VOICE

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Dave Whaley Kicks Off Sheriff's Campaign with Allegations

STEVE PASTIS

Focusing on allegations of financial impropriety "to the point of possible embezzlement" in the Deputy Sheriff's Association, and the lack of a response by the Tulare County Sheriff's Department, former undersheriff Dave Whaley announced his candidacy to head the department in front of the Tulare County Courthouse on November 12.

"The issue is the old DSA board that was in office used the credit cards of the DSA to make personal purchases," said Whaley, a 34-year veteran of the department. "I've been told they used the cards to buy tires for personal vehicles, and to buy boots and clothes for a wife, and orthodontic care for their kids. I was told they spent almost $50,000 for gas in a two-year period. The only vehicle the association owns is a little tractor on the pistol range.

"A year ago when this allegedly first came to light, I had some deputies and command staff come to me with their concerns," said Whaley, who said he then invited Sheriff Bill Wittman to breakfast to discuss the issue.

"He said the county counsel gave him the opinion that he couldn't get involved in a union matter," said Whaley. "This isn't a union matter. This is a criminal matter and it needs to be investigated by an outside agency."

In a letter dated February 13, 2013, County Counsel Kathleen Bales-Lange informed Sheriff Wittman that, "since the county is a public employer, the actions you can legally take with regards to the activities of the union are limited." The letter references state regulations that if violated would, "risk exposing yourself and the county to even greater liability." Bales-Lange also wrote that union speech and activities are generally considered protected activity under the First Amendment.

"Failure to respect the Association's right to conduct its own business could subject you and the county to litigation for civil rights violation by the Association, which would be considered a

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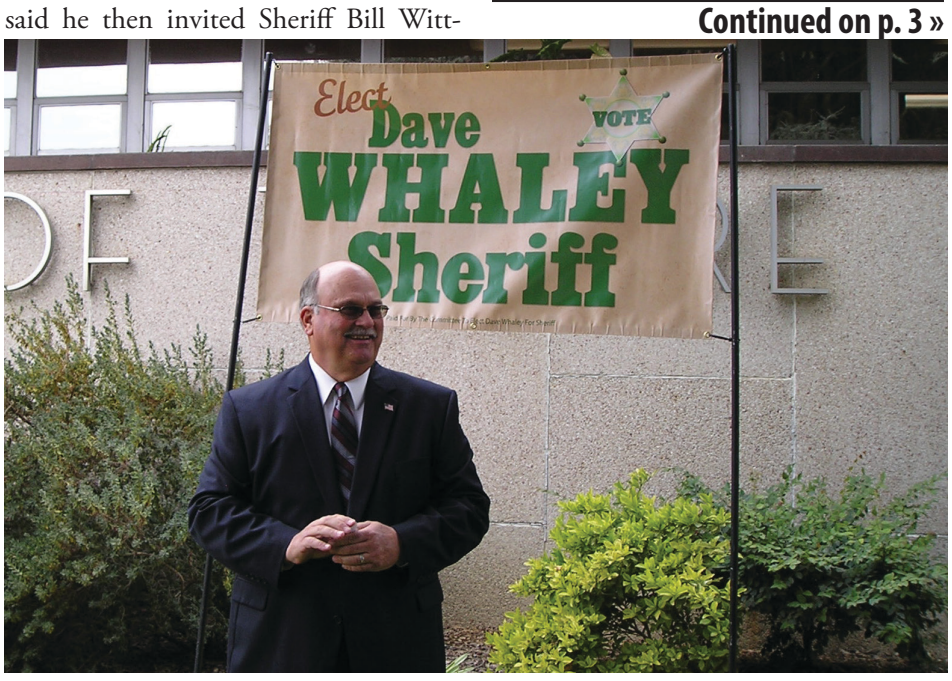

Dave Whaley announces his candidacy in front of the Tulare County Courthouse.

Accreditation Commission Visits COS

TONY MALDONADO

The College of the Sequoias reached another milestone in its accreditation efforts recently when the college was visited by representatives from the state's accrediting commission.

A visiting team from the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges visited the college's Visalia Campus on Nov. 13 and 14 to evaluate COS's progress in its efforts to keep its accreditation.

Over the two days, the five-member team looked at the college's three new governance manuals, reviewed course outlines and student learning outcomes, and were given access to hundreds of pages of documents that outlined the college's work since it was placed on "Show Cause" status earlier this year in February.

In addition, through interviews with various groups and individuals on campus, the team interviewed over 100 people, according to Stan Carrizosa, the college's president/superintendent; they also interviewed members of the college's Student Senate and Accreditation Community Advisory Committee.

The visiting team will begin work on an evaluation report, Carrizosa said, and the college expects to receive a copy of the report within 30 days. At that time, the report's contents will also be made publicly available.

The ACCJC will meet in Novato in January to discuss College of the Sequoias and other colleges in the current evaluation cycle. Representatives from the college – including Carrizosa; vice-president, Dr. Jennifer Vega la Serna; and the head of its Board of Trustees, Lori Cardoza – will be present to answer any questions and to provide comment during the meeting.

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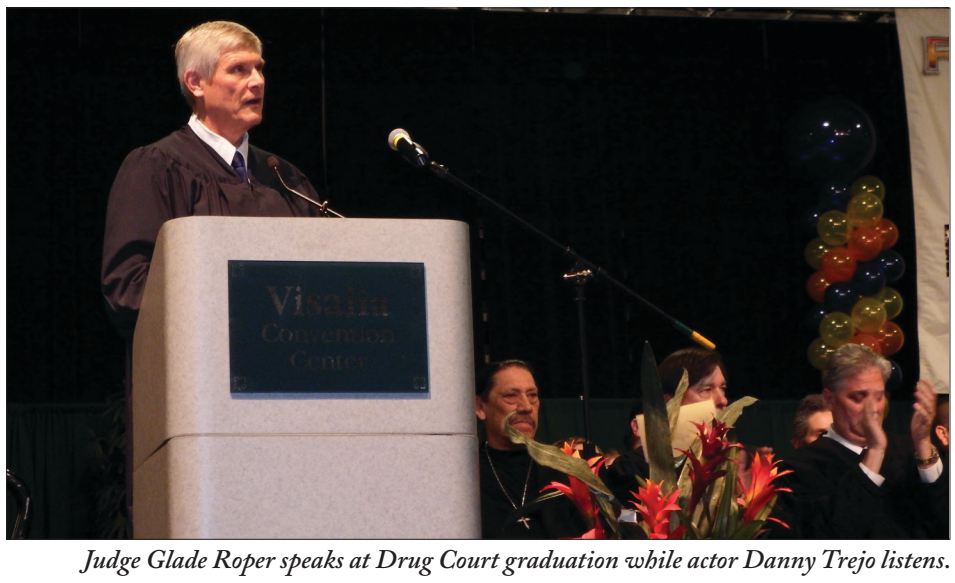

Judge Glade Roper speaks at Drug Court graduation while actor Danny Trejo listens.

Tulare County's Drug Court Surpasses Its Founder's Dreams

DAVID MARSH

An impressive array of city and county leaders turned out in an solid show of support for last week's Adult Drug Court graduation ceremony held at the Visalia Convention Center. Gracing the front row of an extended line of chairs that spanned the stage was a bevy of local dignitaries that included a mayor, a sheriff, a district attorney and more judges, both sitting and retired, than a prolific career criminal could expect to encounter in a lifetime of repeated court appearances.

Success, it would seem, has an allure quite similar to that of a powerful magnet: people just seem to be irresistibly attracted to it. The greater the success, the more the attraction.

And by all accounts the local drug courts (Porterville and Visalia) have been wildly successful, graduating more than 2,000 participants since their 1996 inception, handily surpassing the aspirations of the man unofficially recognized as the "godfather" of Tulare County's Drug Court, Presiding Judge Glade Roper of the Porterville Superior Court.

A tall, rather thin man with a full head of wavy gray hair and emanating a vibrancy and energy that belies his years, Roper, 60, officially retired from the court in June but continues to sit on the bench on special assignment. With an unusually keen memory for detail, he still vividly recalls a time some 17 years ago when the Drug Court wasn't so popularly supported by his colleagues in the judiciary, local elected officials or department heads.

It was during his fifth year as a sitting judge that Roper's growing sense

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Changes to Sequoia Mall Will be a Slow, Steady Process

CATHERINE DOE

The interior of the Sequoia Mall.

The crowds of shoppers will return to Sequoia Mall, but it will take a long time. Escrow closed Friday, November 15, and the new owner, David Paynter of Paynter Realty and Investments Inc., has not made an official announcement of his plans. The new owner faces many challenges, but the consensus is that if anyone can do it, Paynter can.

According to the *Business Journal*, Paynter said, "It's an excellent piece of property that has a lot of potential."

Paynter has not made an announcement of his plans yet because he doesn't have one set in stone. According to a source involved with the mall's future, he is still working on his strategy to revive the mall. What the new owner does will depend on what the market will bear. Paynter is considering all his options such as making the structure an open-air mall, doing a full renovation or demolishing the structure.

Whatever direction he takes, Paynter will need the best of his negotiation skills. Hobby Lobby and Sears own their buildings and are connected to the enclosed portion. Demolition is the most

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FROM THE PUBLISHER'S DESK

Happy Thanksgiving, Everyone

I thought, initially, I'd write the traditional list of everything I'm thankful for this season, but the main reason not to is that it's trite. I'm thankful for this sense of restraint. And a compendium of those things I'm not grateful for is just too negative to contemplate. It's been a daunting year, and I'm exhausted. In March, my wife and I re-founded this paper; in July, we hosted a destination wedding--and these were the highlights. The lowlights were unspeakable.

So I'll not speak of them here.

Instead, this is the perfect place to relate a Thanksgiving lesson I learned way back at the age of ten or twelve. My grandmother, my father's mother, in addition to being of Mexican heritage, was, as everyone's Grandma, not your average cook. There is something about the notion of Grandma, my own and everyone's, that equates itself not only with culinary prowess, but with sewing and other traditional crafts. It's uncanny. But my Grandma, with the sole exception of not being tall, was exceptional in every respect. She spoke at least four languages, and was admitted to UC Berkeley at 16. I lived with her while attending university there myself, and I can attest to the fact that she was an absolute crossword puzzle ace. It's impossible to appreciate the speed at which some people finish these without also witnessing at what astonishing ease: you would think, surely, that Grandma at least periodically furrowed her brow in concentration. Nope; she watched television while doing them, Jeopardy religiously--sharp in every conceivable topic--and I don't recall once ever getting the better of her. Of course she knitted--and sewed--and everyone in the family still enjoys as heirlooms her comforters and Christmas ornaments. But I'm speaking of a Thanksgiving lesson here--and what speaks of Thanksgiving more precisely than the traditional dinner?

I wonder how many millions there are who, after Grandma has passed, miss her cooking most of all but find it impossible to replicate her recipes. Her touch and expertise have vanished, as has the love with which she prepared everything--and it's vexing because she can never, however temporarily, be welcomed back to the table this way. It may be something that only comes with hindsight but, clearly, we should each appreciate and cherish our elders. Still, that's not the lesson; I was only ten or twelve at the time, if you recall, and I'm speaking of a particular meal.

Living with Grandma, it was difficult to stay in decent shape. She regularly, and expertly, cooked many of my favorite Mexican dishes--recipes going back into family history who knows how far? Her house was two miles from the Berkeley campus; to counteract the effects of too many second helpings, I took to walking to class in the morning and home again in the afternoon.

Imagine, then, what she made of the big dinner. Omitting only what I remember as a shrimp aspic--puke-pink, plattered gelatinous and quivering from a mold, fascinating and revolting simultaneously, the sight of which to this day I think more apropos of Halloween than Thanksgiving--it was a bonanza. The answer to each of Grandma's questions was always, simply, "Yes."

"Would you like dark meat or white?" she'd ask. "Stuffing or mashed potatoes? Jellied or whole cranberry sauce? Creamed spinach? Gravy? Apple or pumpkin pie--or pound cake? Whipped cream or ice cream?"

Yes!

And one year, when I was ten or twelve, it all caught up with me. This went beyond belt loosening, past the fact that, home from Grandma's, I was climbing the stairs to bed on all fours. I was so distressingly full that death was something I actually looked upon with affection. So I promised myself never to overeat again. I haven't. That's still not the lesson. Any idiot knows it's not a good idea to gorge himself like a goose being force fed for the improvement of the foie gras. No--the lesson is this: make yourself a promise, any promise, and keep it. Call it your Thanksgiving Day resolution--then give thanks that you're weeks ahead of everyone else, even if Christmas music is already coming over the radio.

Happy Thanksgiving, everyone.

— Joseph Oldenbourg

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POLITICAL FIX

CATHERINE DOE

FINAL ANALYSIS ON CITY COUNCIL AND VUSD ELECTION

Being endorsed by the Visalia Unified Teacher's Association didn't help Elda Balderas or David Alviso to win the election. Voters instead elected newcomer John Crabtree and incumbent Charles Ulmschneider, who has missed five school board meetings and was paid approximately $1,750 for his absence. While the rest of the Visalia Unified School Board, and those who attend the meetings, might think they got a pretty good deal, most taxpayers are angry.

So how did this happen? Even though the *Visalia Times-Delta* broke the news six days before the election that Mr. Ulmschneider actually lived in Stockton during the workweek, almost everyone had already voted by mail.

Out of Visalia's 68,385 registered voters, only 2,500 actually went to the polls November 5th. According to the Tulare County Registrar of Voters a total of 11,878 people voted, from that number, 7,881 used a mail-in ballot. Some people handed over their mail-in ballot at the polls, but they probably already had them filled out. So any campaigning or breaking news about the candidates during the previous week affected only 4% of the registered voters.

The low voter turnout probably had the same effect on the city council race. It is surprising that Vincent Salinas, who ran a good campaign, had lots of experience, plenty of money and a boatload of endorsements, didn't do better. Greg Collins' seat was obviously the most vulnerable, but that wasn't evident on election night. Despite the fact that Mr. Collins ran an uninspired campaign and did very little fundraising, only three votes separated his third-place position from second-place finisher Steve Nelsen.

Mr. Salinas was also ahead of Mr. Collins on the Chamber of Commerce's scorecard. But the chamber's results from their forum were only available after most Visalians had cast their votes. Each candidate was scored on a scale from one to five, with one being business-neutral and five being very business-friendly. Warren Gubler got the highest score at 4.78. Mr. Nelsen came in second with 4.0, followed by Mr. Salinas at 3.33, Mr. Collins at 2.78 and finally Michael Brown with 2.11. The candidate's response to the chamber's questions can be found on their website.

Mr. Salinas took first place in terms of fundraising. He raised and spent $20,144.11, $5,000 more than Mr. Gubler, who raised the second largest pot. Mr. Brown raised a paltry $2,563, half of which he donated to himself. But before you start chuckling, realize that out of all the more veteran candidates, he got the biggest bang for his buck. The relatively unknown young lawyer received 2,565 votes, meaning he got one vote for every dollar spent. Mr. Salinas, on the other hand, spent almost $6 for every vote. Not exactly Meg Whitman, but not effective either.

One last interesting tidbit of information is the fact that someone, maybe a candidate, paid $550 for the VBN Mail Precinct Information. This report gives updates during the 17-day period of absentee voting on who has been issued an absentee ballot and who has turned one in. This allows a candidate to do targeted campaigning. Considering a local candidate's small campaign budget, that's a lot of money.

DEAN FLOREZ GETS A ROUGH START TO HIS STATE CONTROLLER CAMPAIGN

Former majority leader of the California State Senate Dean Florez got a major slap-down from the Fair Political Practices Commission. According to the AP, "The ethics agency found Mr. Florez made 168 personal purchases from campaign committees he set up for an ill-fated 2010 run for lieutenant governor and a 2014 candidacy for state controller." It seems he used $26,000 in political funds to make personal purchases from Ikea and Bed, Bath and Beyond, and buy concert tickets, fireworks, gas and expensive dinners. Written in F*resno Bee*'s "Thumbs-up/Thumbs-down" column, "during his time in the State Senate, Florez built a persona as a fearless, high-profile crusader who demanded accountability of others."

As Rick Perry so famously said, "Oops."

Though no one likes to hear that their representatives are committing fraud, it will be entertaining to hear how Mr. Florez justifies having to pay the largest fine in California history while he tries to win his bid for state controller in 2014. Mr. Florez's possible opponent for controller is Democrat Dan Lockyer, who is the current state treasurer. Mr. Lockyer has raised $2 million for his campaign, but Mr. Florez only has $9,500 in his war chest--though that may be a consequence of his fraud case and not the actual amount he has raised.

Coming from a political family, Mr. Florez certainly knew better. His mother, Fran Florez, no stranger to controversy herself, got into a four-way political fight with her son and the Parra family during both the 2008 and 2010 elections. Just this year, Ms. Florez, current mayor of Shafter, was pushed out of the race for State Senate District 16 against Andy Vidak in favor of Leticia Perez.

Before entering politics, Mr. Florez was an investment banker.

FUSD TRUSTEE LUIS CHAVEZ TO CHALLENGE STATE SENATOR ANDY VIDAK

There will be no rematch between State Senator Andy Vidak and Leticia Perez for Senate District 16. Mr. Vidak's new opponent in the 2014 election will be Fresno Unified School District Board Member Luis Chavez. Mr. Chavez, a Democrat, is Councilmember Sal Quintero's chief of staff.

Mr. Vidak currently holds the 16th district seat that will change to the 14th district for next year's election.

Mr. Chavez was first elected to the Fresno Unified School Board in 2012. For those of you who may want to highlight Mr. Chavez' scant experience holding elected office, take into consideration Mr. Vidak's experience in 2010, when he ran for Congress--which was none. Not until July 2013, when he beat Leticia Perez in the special election to replace Michael Rubio, did he ever hold political office.

Democrats hold a 14-point advantage in this district, and 71 percent of the registered voters are Hispanic. But it's not who lives in a district that counts, it's who votes – and that would be old, White Republicans. That said, I predict Mr. Vidak will easily retain his seat.

WILL THE SHUTDOWN HAPPEN AGAIN?

The holiday season is here, and while some of us are counting down the days 'til Christmas, Jack Lew, the Treasury Secretary, is counting down the days 'til the U.S. hits its debt limit, February 7th, 2014. Will the tri-corned hat people in the Republican Party push the United States to within hours of defaulting on its bills one more time? Are they planning on shutting down the government again?

On ABC's "This Week," Sen. Ted Cruz, R-TX, said, "I would do anything and I will continue to do anything I can to stop the train wreck that is Obamacare." Read: he's up for it.

But, according to Sen. Mitch McConnell, R-KY, the answer would be no. He said on "Face the Nation," "I don't think a two-week paid vacation for federal employees is conservative policy. A number of us were saying back in July that this strategy could not and would not work and of course it didn't. So there will not be another government shutdown. You can count on that."

Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-SC, also said on "Face the Nation" that the shutdown was a wake-up call for Republicans. Former Governor, Jeb Bush, R-FL, said the shutdown standoff did not end well for his party.

Rep. Devin Nunes, who gained national attention with his animated critique of the last shutdown, had this to say, "I would guess the Democrats are praying for another shutdown in order to distract attention from the ObamaCare disaster, the dismal economy, and the various scandals that have already undermined this president's second term."

Thinking about it logically, which is probably my first mistake, the Republicans already got the cuts they wanted with the sequester. $85 billion were trimmed off of the budget during the past fiscal year. Many of the cuts mirror those proposed in Rep. Paul Ryan's draconian budget. For anyone not paying attention, these automatic spending cuts are supposed to continue for nine more years.

The threat of electoral defeat should also give the Republicans pause. While attacks on each other intensify, and the possibility of another Republican-engineered shutdown looms in the future, their party's chance to regain the Senate and retain their power in Congress is slipping away.

Americans' approval of Congress has dropped to 9%, the lowest in Gallop's 39-year history of polling. The drop in the approval rating is mostly due to the shutdown, which most Americans blame on the Republicans.

Right after the shutdown ended on October 17th, Sen. McConnell said, "I think we have now fully acquainted our new members with what a losing strategy that is." Let's hope they all still feel that way come January.

Whaley

Continued from p. 1

right to conduct its own business could subject you and the county to litigation for civil rights violation by the Association, which would be considered a person under the First Amendment, or its Board or Members," she wrote.

"My position is that her opinion deals with the fact that administration can't get involved with bargaining or election issues," said Whaley. "I told him, Bill, your oath of office takes precedence over a county counsel opinion. To this day, the sheriff's department has done nothing about it."

"This is a union matter and we can't get involved in a union matter," said Acting Sheriff Mike Boudreaux. "This is a union that needs to operate in the manner they see fit."

He also explained that the sheriff's department does not have jurisdiction because "the allegations happened in the city of Visalia."

The union officials in the center of the allegations have since been voted out of office, but Whaley is concerned that they are still on the command staff and have not been put on leave or transferred. "These allegations have divided the department and created serious morale issues," he said.

The Tulare County District Attorney's Office began an investigation into the matter on August 6.

"We were asked to do the investigation by the Visalia Police Department," said Anthony Fultz, assistant district attorney, who added that thousands of documents and financial reports are being looked at. "We're going to take whatever time is necessary to separate facts from rumors."

"We're letting the inquiry take its path without interfering," said Boudreaux. "At this point, we haven't been contracted by anyone, beyond rumor and speculation."

At the November 12 announcement, Whaley was introduced by former Tulare County Sheriff Bob Wiley, who called him "an excellent candidate," and said, "When you go to him with a problem, you will get some follow-up."

Whaley concluded his comments by briefly discussing his six-point platform, which includes new and improved programs and equipment for the sheriff's department.

Drug Court

Continued from p. 1

of frustration and dissatisfaction with the "revolving door" nature of the judicial system spurred him to take a long, hard look at the growing number of repeat offending drug addicts engaged in a seemingly never-ending parade through his courtroom. "I would enter the courtroom and immediately notice in the jury box (where defendants are held) the same familiar faces over and over again," Roper said. "I realized that I knew everybody in the jury box by name, and I told myself that something here has simply got to change." Roper began carefully researching extensive court records to determine such things as how many drug cases the court handled each year and at what cost (about $5,000 per case), the length of time each convicted defendant served in the county lock-up (about 270 days), the amount of money spent by the county to house each prisoner, and any other pertinent factors related to the issue. After concluding that the county was spending approximately $46 million annually just on issues relating to these drug cases alone, Roper became more determined than ever to find a solution.

> "For Glade, this doesn't have to be about alcohol or drugs, but more so about giving people a second chance in life. He looks very hard to see the best in someone."
>
> — *Phil Cox, Tulare County Supervisor*

After carefully studying a Drug Court program that had been established in nearby Kern County, Roper became certain that he'd found an answer that would save Tulare County many millions of dollars each year, while providing the addicts with effective and lasting treatment that would enable them to reclaim their lives, families and a sense of self respect.

Convinced he had found the answer and now more determined than ever, Roper was nonetheless frustrated in his efforts to rally support for the idea from Tulare County officials who were skeptical of the relatively new and unproven concept of Drug Courts as an effective approach for tackling what had become a fast-growing drug problem in Tulare County.

I was hoping to line up some support in order to get things off the ground for the Drug Court," Roper recalled. "And with that in mind, I set up a series of meetings and invited the other judges, the sheriff, the mayor, the district attorney and the police chief--anybody at all who had a stake in seeking a solution to the drug problem in our county. But by the third meeting I was forced to cancel the remaining scheduled meetings because no one was showing up. I couldn't seem to convince anybody that this a valid approach worth taking a good look at."

Undeterred by the near universal uncertainty and disinterest voiced by his peers that his idea was doomed to almost certain failure, Roper turned his focus to the herculean task of building a Drug Court program for Tulare County from the ground up.

The Drug Court concept had been pioneered in 1989 in Dade County, Florida, as a means to deal with an exploding drug problem and overcrowded jails. The novel approach combined the coercive and controlling power of the judiciary with an array of drug treatment programs in an attempt to help addicts make a clean break from their addictions and resulting criminal activity. Numerous independent studies have determined that Drug Court graduates have a significantly lower recidivism rate as a direct result of their completion of the program.

Under the Drug Court model, defendants are allowed to plead guilty and then make a choice between incarceration or entering the rigidly structured and uncompromisingly enforced treatment program lasting approximately 90 weeks. There are over 2000 Drug Courts across the country and the rather considerable costs associated with a programs' operation are usually assumed by the state or local government for the area in which each operates.

> "We have all seen the success that the Drug Court has become, and we have to give compliments to Judge Glade Roper for being such a true visionary."
>
> — *Mike Boudreaux, Tulare County Acting Sheriff*

A man whom so many of his peers today refer to as "a great visionary" and "forward-thinking," Roper adopted what he felt were the best components from the nationally established model and melded them with a few of his own ideas to form Tulare County's first Drug Court. And on March 16 1996, Roper presided over his court's first session and its three initial defendants.

Roper alludes to the fact that the early going got a bit rough at times as the program encountered unforeseen potholes and bumps in the road that forced him to make changes and adaptations to his fledgling program as part of the growing and learning process.

While recognizing the precarious nature and seemingly perpetual volatility of Tulare County's governmental financial structure as well as seeking to insure the future financial viability of his unavoidably pricey new program, Roper took a radical departure from the model adopted by the other, government-financed Drug Courts throughout the state as well as the nation, and came up with the only program that is self-supporting through fees charged to it's participants.

Participants in Tulare County's Adult Drug Court Program are required to attend three hours each week in group therapy as well as one-and-one-half hours in individual counseling. Furthermore, each person must attend at least four 12-step-related recovery fellowships each week. All must submit to at least two or more weekly random drug tests costing them $10 apiece.

Costs for the participants each week average about $60. With the program lasting a minimum of 78 weeks, total costs for each participant come to at least $4,680. Violations of program rules can cause a delay of advancement through the program and a resulting average stay of 90 weeks in the program, pushing the total costs to $5,400.

Program participants must complete high school or earn a GED before they are allowed to graduate, and at the time of graduation they must be employed full-time or enrolled in a full-time educational program.

Most importantly, according to Roper, is the program's strident emphasis on honesty and truthfulness. A participant's temporary relapse is perhaps forgivable, but let him or her dare lie about it to the court and a quick trip off to jail becomes a very real possibility. Honesty at all costs!

In return for the extensive personal and financial investment required of each program participant, they are given an opportunity to participate in and complete a program that allows them a chance to reclaim their lives, families and self-respect: a program that boasts a very respectable recidivism rate of approximately 5 to 20 percent.

Near the close of our interview Roper paused, becoming quiet and introspective for a couple of moments. Looking over at me, he resumed our conversation and, in a somewhat subdued tone, alluded to a personal sense of loss relating to his decision to retire and relinquish control over his "baby" after 17 personally rewarding years at its helm – a program that he gave birth to, and one into which he has poured a seemingly endless amount of energy and personal essence.

But just as quickly the moment passed and a smile replaced the brief melancholy. Looking into his eyes, the smile was quite genuine.

"It's a beginning, though, as well," he said, "as I am very confident that Judge Johnson will put his own personal stamp upon the court and then take it to new heights and success. He's a very capable judge and there's still plenty of room for new growth and improvements."

The Honorable Judge Gary Johnson was appointed to head the Porterville Branch of the Adult Drug Court on the October 15 opening of South Valley Justice Center.

Johnson was effusive in his praise for the job Roper has done with the Drug Court over the past 17 years, and he also expressed great satisfaction with his new assignment, saying, "I had let it be known that (leading the Drug Court) was something that I was interested in doing. And if it were left up to me, I could see myself doing this for a long time."

The holidays can be a very difficult time when someone you love is not there to share in the joy of the season. Hospice wants to help you honor and remember that special someone.

In our continuing tradition, Kaweah Delta Hospice is offering you the opportunity to purchase, for a $25 donation to Hospice, a special ornament bearing your loved one's name, which you are then invited to place on our tree at the reading of your loved one's name at this year's Light Up A Life Celebration.

To register, please call the Hospice office at 733-0642.

Kaweah Delta Hospice

A division of Kaweah Delta Health Care District

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December 3 , 2013
7:00 p.m.

Doors open at
6:00 p.m.

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Visalia Convention Center
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Visalia, CA 93291

Kenya Ministry Accomplishes Mission in Visalia

STEVE PASTIS

Julius Pulei, the founder of Kenya Dirt Road Ministry and a member of the Maasai tribe, is now back home after raising money in the South Valley to build wells and other projects for villages in Kenya.

Several months ago, he met some members of Visalia's Gateway Church in Los Angeles and decided to come to Visalia toraise money for wells, schools and churches in Kenya.

Pulei considers his mission a success.

The first well, in the village of Mosiro, was funded by a $50,000 donation from Western Milling and is now in operation. Drilling for the second well, paid for by a $50,000 donation from John Hammer of Hanford, is scheduled for this week. An additional two wells have also been funded.

"There are other people who indicated they are going to help," said Pulei, who expects a new school to be constructed in Mosiro by the end of January. The school will start with a kindergarten and will add the next grade each year. The cost of each building is $5,000 and money for the classrooms is being raised in Visalia. "The (Kenyan) government will help pay teachers, and parents will also pay," he said.

Pulei, along with Kenya Dirt Road Ministry officers in Visalia – Rick Galvin, president; Steve Hickerson, CFO; and Marion Stilley, administration – have been working to raise money and create a nonprofit corporation. Papers to establish the ministry as a 501(c)3 corporation are being filed this week.

Pulei started Kenya Dirt Road Ministry to support and empower the nomadic Maasai people, a tribe of 500,000 living in the Great Rift Valley of Kenya.

Villagers in Mosiro, Kenya, get water from the first well funded by South Valley businesses and individuals. This one was the result of a donation from Western Milling of Visalia.

The ministry's current project focuses on five villages of about 5,000 to 10,000 people each who have had no water. Now the village of Mosiro has a well that can supply up to four liters of water an hour, more than is currently needed but, according to Pulei, "it will grow to that size," because people from up to 10 miles away will come to the well.

The wells will dramatically change the lives of the people in the village, said Pulei. "Maybe they will introduce dairy goats and cattle, then produce more milk. They can introduce dry land agriculture." Water from the well will enable them to grow crops such as beans, maize, cabbage and spinach, he said. "They won't have to go all the way to the cities for food.

"The water will be a focal point for the community," he said, adding that a village market and meeting places will soon develop around the wells.

"Even the government of Kenya is happy about the water," Pulei said. "They had been wanting to reach these people but don't have the money."

Pulei expects to return to Visalia because there is still work to be done here.

"We're short on monthly support," said Hickerson, explaining that $3,000 is needed monthly to operate each well. "Most people have given toward project needs but have not signed up to help with the monthly costs."

The ministry is also looking for a used vehicle, preferably a heavy-duty 4X4 that can take four 55-gallon drums of diesel fuel over mountainous terrain to each well to run its generator. There are also expenses for Pulei's ministry.

"His ministry is $3,000 a month for himself, a full-time helper, an office person (part-time), an office and a vehicle," said Hickerson, who added that all of the ministry work in Visalia is voluntary.

Pulei said he "received many calls" following an article about his efforts that appeared in the August 1 issue of the *Valley Voice*.

"Visalia has been a good giving place for me," he said. "Even people in Kenya think I hit the jackpot – to get two wells in one year. Visalia has been good. I feel like it's my home and it has the best people I've ever met."

For more information, visit www.kenyadirtroadministry.org. Donations may be made to: Kenya Dirt Road Ministry, c/o Gateway Church, 1100 Sowell St., Visalia, CA 93277.

Five South Valley Blood Drives Announced

With the holidays approaching, it is an unfortunate fact that more freeway travel means that more accidents will happen. The Central California Blood Center prepares by making sure there is an adequate blood supply for Valley hospitals. Both faithful and new donors are needed to keep up the supplies in November. One pint of blood can save up to three lives.

The following blood drives have been scheduled in Tulare County:

Saturday, November 23, from 10am-3pm, the Grocery Outlet Blood Drive will be held at 2323 S. Mooney Blvd., Visalia.

Monday, December 2, from 8am to noon, the Mt. Whitney High School Blood Drive will be held at 900 S. Conyer St., Visalia.

Wednesday, December 4, from 10am-3pm, the College of the Sequoias Blood Drive will be held in the COS Quad area, 915 S. Mooney Blvd., Visalia.

Thursday December 5, from 8:30-11:30pm, the United Parcel Service-Visalia Blood Drive will be held at the UPS Facility, 7401 W. Sunnyview Ave., Visalia.

Thursday December 5, from 2-6pm, the Three Rivers Community Blood Drive will be held at The Three Rivers Memorial Building, 43490 Sierra Dr., Three Rivers.

Donations can also be made at any of these South Valley Central California Blood Center locations:

Visalia – 1515 S. Mooney Blvd., Monday – Thursday 8am-6:30pm, and Saturday 9am-1pm

Porterville – 93 N. Main St., Tuesday – Thursday 11am- 6pm, and Saturday 9am-1pm

For more information, including about other drives, call the Visalia Blood Center at 302-1300.

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News in Brief...

SHOP SMALL SATURDAY SET FOR NOVEMBER 30

Visalia Council Member Bob Link got a little emotional at this week's city council meeting while presenting a proclamation marking November 30, 2013 as Small Business Saturday. A downtown icon, Link is retiring later this year and his reading of the proclamation was the last time in front of the council. He pointed out that there are 28 million small businesses in the U.S., and those businesses create two-thirds of the country's jobs. Up to 50 percent of what is spent in small businesses stays in the community.

Main Street in Visalia is celebrating Shop Small Saturday on November 30 by having special sales and providing goodies for their patrons. Some businesses will offer $10 off purchases made that day with an American Express card.

Shop Small Saturday is the result of a movement that has been forming over the last three years to attract shoppers away from big, box stores on Black Friday to shopping local at small businesses. Choosing downtown instead of the malls this holiday season might also send a message to the big national chains that holding Black Friday on Thanksgiving weekend is unacceptable.

HANFORD-LEMOORE NAMED MILITARY BOOM TOWN

The U.S. military means more than power. It means money, especially to areas such as Hanford-Corcoran, which placed tenth on SpareFoot's list of America's Top 10 Military Boom Towns as a result of Naval Air Station Lemoore. Per capita personal income in the area has risen an average of 6.48% annually from 2009 to 2011.

Other cities on the list (in order of rank) are: Elizabethtown, KY; El Paso, TX; Hinesville, GA; Colorado Springs, CO; Clarksville, TN; San Angelo, TX; Sumter, SC; Columbus, GA: and Rapid City, SD.

BLOCKBUSTER TO CLOSE LOCAL STORES

Blockbuster announced that it would close its remaining U.S. company-owned stores, as well as its DVD By Mail services, by early January. Franchised and licensed stores in the U.S. and abroad would remain open for business.

Among the approximately 300 remaining U.S.-based retail stores set to close are two stores in Visalia, which are currently having sales to liquidate their stock.

"This is not an easy decision, yet consumer demand is clearly moving to digital distribution of video entertainment," said Joseph P. Clayton, DISH president and CEO. "Despite our closing of the physical distribution elements of the business, we continue to see value in the Blockbuster brand, and we expect to leverage that brand as we continue to expand our digital offerings."

TULARE COUNTY LIBRARY, FOODLINK ANNOUNCE 'FOOD FOR FINES'

Tulare County residents who have library fines can get a break on what they owe and help the hungry at the same time.

During the month of November, anyone who brings in non-perishable food items to any branch of the Tulare County Library can have their fines reduced or eliminated. One dollar per food donation will be deducted from existing fines, except for any charges for lost or damaged library items. There is no limit to the amount of fine reduction.

The food will be picked up by Foodlink for Tulare County and used to restock the pantries of food banks throughout the county. Items collected from the 15 branches will be distributed in each branch's local community and surrounding areas.

"Food for Fines" is a new collaborative program sponsored by the library and Foodlink. It will be held semi-annually in the months of November and April. Library patrons can bring their books and donations November 1-29 to any of the following library branches: Alpaugh, Dinuba, Earlimart, Exeter, Ivanhoe, Orosi, Pixley, Springville, Strathmore, Terra Bella, Three Rivers, Tipton, Visalia and Woodlake. Non-perishable food items will be accepted thankfully from anyone wishing to donate them, whether a fine is due or not.

FOOD 4 LESS TO DONATE 1,000 TURKEYS, FUNDS TO VALLEY RESCUE MISSION

The generosity of golfers at an annual golf tournament hosted by Food 4 Less this past spring will pay big dividends for the less fortunate this fall. Food 4 Less stores in the Central Valley, operated by the Gong Family based in Visalia, are teaming up with Danny Little, CEO of the Visalia Rescue Mission, to distribute 1,000 turkeys to rescue missions throughout the Central Valley region.

"It's something that we as a company are looking forward to doing," explains Tom Gong, Food 4 Less president. "It gives us an opportunity to say thanks to the communities we serve in a positive, pro-active way."

With markets in Porterville, Visalia, Selma, Fresno, Madera, Merced and Atwater, Food 4 Less is looking to serve thousands this Thanksgiving. For rescue missions throughout the Central Valley, traditional holidays offer an opportunity for a special meal to be prepared and served at the various food kitchens. The Visalia Rescue Mission has agreed to be the distribution point for the massive turkey donation for the Rescue Missions in the Central Valley cities that Food 4 Less serves.

In addition to the turkey donation, Food 4 Less will also donate $5,000 towards the Mission's Oval Park Project, which involves working with the city of Visalia and Visalia Parks and Recreation in reclaiming the Oval for North Visalia Families. Food 4 Less will also provide a $5,000 credit to be used by the Rescue Mission this coming year for bulk purchases used during traditional seasonal events such as Christmas and Easter when community meals are provided to those less fortunate.

FHCN RECEIVES $5,000 GRANT FOR WOODLAKE COMMUNITY GARDEN

Family HealthCare Network (FHCN) has received a grant of $5,000 from the United Way of Tulare County for the Woodlake Community Garden. In May 2012, FHCN opened a larger community health center in Woodlake. The 9,000 square-foot facility was built to enhance a team-based, patient-centered care model but also encompassed components that are very rare within a community health center setting. The organization set aside a portion of its land to facilitate a community garden for the Woodlake community.

Over the last year, the organization has worked with the community in the development of the garden.

"Our community health team and the Woodlake Community Garden committee should truly be commended for the commitment to making this garden so beautiful," said Kerry Hydash, FHCN president and CEO. "Our staff's role was only to facilitate bringing together community members to develop the garden. What you see is the vision of the Woodlake Community Garden committee."

The garden has been funded through generous local community donations and the community coming together to develop this piece of land with FHCN, which a year ago was an empty lot. The project has demonstrated the opportunity for community health centers to engage with families beyond the four walls of a health facility and have an impact on the quality of health in their community.

SMALL BUSINESS TRANSACTION COUNT DECLINES

The total of business-for-sale deals that closed in October dipped to 1,143, a decline of about 18% from the number of competed escrows on small and mid-sized businesses recorded during October 2012, according to figures released by the BizBen Index. One lone transaction was recorded in Tulare County in October, and none in Kings County.

Accreditation

Continued from p. 1

During the meeting, the commission convenes into a private session in which it decides the status of colleges it is evaluating and sends out "action letters" which inform the colleges of their status. COS expects to receive its action letter in February, roughly a year after receiving its "Show Cause" notice.

Any action that is not a revocation of accreditation is a net positive, Carrizosa said, and it is rare that colleges are taken from "Show Cause," the worst accreditation status, to full reaffirmation. Placement on "Warning," "Probation" or an extension of "Show Cause" show that the commission has faith in the college's efforts, he said.

"It's not very likely that a college is going to go from show cause to fully reaffirmed," Carrizosa said. "What's going to happen is we're going to get some level of extended time."

Documents related to the college's accreditation efforts are available at its specialized accreditation website: http://www.cos.edu/Accreditation

HOLIDAY SHOPPING SAFETY

The Pipkin Detective Agency would like to share some important safety tips when shopping this holiday season. Making sure you and your family are safe will make your holidays less stressful.

- Enable auto locking feature on your vehicle, if available, to avoid easy access when shopping.
- Shop during daylight hours whenever possible, however if you shop at night, go with a friend or family member.
- Avoid carrying a purse or wallet if possible and never carry large amounts of cash.
- Avoid wearing expensive jewellery especially if you are walking a long distance from your car.
- Always carry proper identification such as driver license or ID card.
- Use checks or credit cards for purchases when possible and keep cash in your front pocket.
- Criminal activity becomes more prevalent during the holidays so beware of strangers approaching you.
- When returning to your vehicle wait until you are ready to open the door before disarming your alarm.

Be Safe and Happy Holidays!

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Link Brothers Hope Tradition Continues

ADINA ESCARSEGA

Link's Men's and Women's Wear in downtown Visalia has been offering a very special kind of customer service for 72 years. Opened by Joe Link only four days before the bombing of Pearl Harbor, Links has long since become a downtown landmark.

For the past 40 years, sons Bob and Tom Link continued to carry on the family tradition of serving their community with old-fashioned perks that still include home deliveries, but now they have sold their building and are planning to retire by February 1. The brothers hope the Link's tradition will continue with new owners.

Tom and Bob Link in the 1970s.

The history of Links holds a significant spot in Visalia history. Joe Link originally worked for Leo Schelling at Schelling's Men's and Women's Wear, which opened in the 1920s. There he developed a love for the business.

"My dad started Schelling's three weeks before the stock market crashed," says Ken Schelling. "Joe used to tutor me in the back room when I was in school."

Schelling added that his dad was not very happy when Joe decided to venture out and open his own store, but both stores survived and thrived even through the adversity of their beginnings. Not only did they survive, but they also supported each other in business.

"If I was out of a certain shirt, I would call Link's, and visa versa," says Schelling. After Schelling's Men's and Women's Wear closed, Ken Schelling went to work for the brothers at Link's in order to continue serving his customers until his retirement.

"Back in the 1950s, downtown was the main shopping center between Bakersfield and Fresno," says Tom Link, and although times have changed, Link's service has not. He says the service they have always offered is unique in comparison to today's large retail store. "We can set our own hours, run our own promotions and offer personal service. If we don't have what the customer needs, we order it. If something does not fit, we tailor it. This kind of service is what brings our customers back to our store time and time again."

Bob and Tom Link today.

In 1965, Joe Link hired his loyal tailor John Aslan who was living in Istanbul, Turkey, had a wife and three children, and was facing religious persecution. In order for Aslan and his family to relocate to the U.S., Joe had to guarantee him a job for one year. Aslan served loyally as the Links' tailor for over 30 years.

When the 1970s came, styles changed and so did Link's.

"Although we had always specialized in fine men's wear, we met the demands of the public by opening two more stores, specializing in blue jeans and also introducing ladies' fashions," said Tom.

Fashion trends, however, did not always agree with the Links. Tom says that they did not like the Nehru look, or double-knits, nonetheless they sold them (and obviously wore them too!).

Retiring from retail sales will not slow the brothers down too much. Both plan to play golf, travel and catch up on their reading. Bob continues on the Visalia City Council after 14 years, where he has served as mayor and vice mayor. Tom is on the Tulare County School Board, and serves on the Visalia Public Cemetery Board and the Tulare County Historical Society Board. He was named the 2012 "Visalia Man of the Year" by the Visalia Chamber of Commerce.

"We have loved our job," says Tom. "It has been like having an open house six days a week. We will miss the business, but we have a vibrant downtown, the best in the Valley, so whoever wants to buy our business is sure to be successful."

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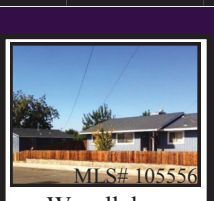
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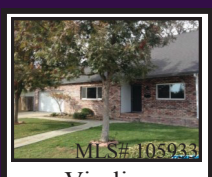
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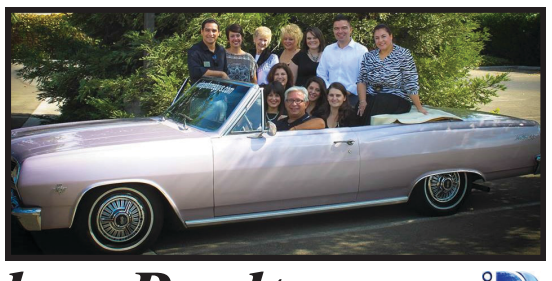

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Contractors' Qualifications Sought for South Valley High-Speed Rail Work

STAFF REPORTS

After signing the construction contract for the first 29 miles of high-speed rail from Madera to Fresno, the California High-Speed Rail Authority (Authority) has called for contractors to submit their qualifications to bid on the next 60-mile phase of construction from Fresno south to the Tulare-Kern County line near Bakersfield.

"The Authority is delivering on its voter-mandated mission to build the nation's first high-speed rail system, which provides economic benefits to the Central Valley and creates thousands of jobs," said Jeff Morales, CEO of the Authority. "High-speed rail is a critical investment in California's transportation infrastructure to address population growth, congested roads and airports, and air quality."

The Authority is starting the process of finding a contractor for the next 60-mile construction phase by formally posting a Request for Qualifications for Construction Package 2-3 (CP2-3). Firms will have until December 6 to submit their statement of qualifications. The Authority will then review these applications and establish a shortlist of the most highly qualified firms to provide design-build services for the project. Firms will be selected based on experience, technical competency, ability to perform and other factors. The shortlisted firms will then be eligible to submit formal design-build proposals in 2014.

Work on CP 2-3 will extend approximately 60 miles through the Central Valley beginning at East American Avenue in Fresno and continuing south to approximately one mile north of the Tulare-Kern County line. The $1.5 to $2 billion design-build contract will bring thousands of jobs to the Central Valley, an area with one of the highest unemployment rates in California and the nation. The route will also provide environmental benefits, relieve roadway congestion and spur economic development.

Design-build contracts mean the chosen contractor must develop innovative means and methods to design the project and then construct it. This approach can lead to faster construction as the contractor is accountable for the timing of design and construction work. The selected design-build firm will be responsible for all work required to design and construct the CP 2-3 segment in the Central Valley. The work will include delivering final designs for bridges, culverts, trenches and tunnels, utility relocations, aerial structures, grade separations, security and drainage. The environmental clearance for the route is already underway and is anticipated to be final by summer 2014.

As part of the project's economic benefits for the region and state, the procurement is expected to attract a number of major national and international construction and design firms. Firms are likely to form teams, including large numbers of sub-consultants, to deliver work on this scale. The Authority is committed to small businesses playing a major role in delivering the high-speed rail program. The design-build contract will include the Authority's adopted 30 percent goal for small business participation in the work.

Funding for CP 2-3 was appropriated in Senate Bill 1029 (Chapter 152, Statutes of 2012) and approved by the state legislature in July 2012. It allocated $2.61 billion of Proposition 1A funds to match $3.24 billion in federal funds for a total of $5.9 billion to begin construction on the first 130 miles of high-speed rail infrastructure in the Central Valley.

The RFQ is posted online available from the Authority's website, www.hsr.ca.gov/Programs/Construction/Design_Build_Construction_Pkg_2_3/index.html All applicant questions regarding the RFQ must be submitted via www.bidsync.com.

The new Visalia Recovery Center.

New Tulare County Recovery Clinic Opens in Visalia

STAFF REPORTS

Community members now have a centralized location as an option for mental health services and alcohol and other drug treatment. The Tulare County Health & Human Services Agency opened its new Visalia Adult Integrated Clinic and Visalia Recovery Center with a grand opening and ribbon-cutting ceremony on November 14.

"I am proud that District 1 has been able to provide a central location that will best serve clients of the Visalia Adult Integrated Clinic and the Visalia Recovery Center," said District 1 Supervisor Allen Ishida. "We anticipate a continuation of the quality services provided by the Department of Mental Health for the residents and clients of Tulare County."

Formerly the Fairway Market, the building has been redesigned to house mental health services and alcohol and other drug treatment staff under one roof. The new building will also house the Psychiatric Emergency Team and a National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) community team.

"Tulare County Mental Health Services is proud and grateful for the opportunity to be able to consistently provide high quality mental health and alcohol and other drug recovery services to our consumers," said Timothy Durick, Psy.D., director of the Department of Mental Health. "With the grand opening of the new Visalia Adult Integrated Clinic and the Recovery Center, we are now able to provide a one-stop location to better provide these high-quality services, with the added benefit of close proximity to both the Transitional Living Center (TLC) and the East Tulare Avenue Cottages to foster a sense of community."

"The Tulare County Mental Health Department acknowledges challenges of accessibility and works diligently to address these barriers," said Irma Rangel, L.C.S.W., chair of the Mental Health Board and director of the Woodlake Family Resource Center. "This newly combined location for mental health services and alcohol and other drug treatment will significantly increase the opportunity to engage clients in a centralized location where they can more easily obtain the services that the Tulare County Department of Mental Health offers."

The entrance to the Visalia Adult Integrated Clinic is at 520 E. Tulare Ave., and the Recovery Center is on the second floor of the building, using a separate entrance and waiting room at 942 Santa Fe Ave. The adult clinic office in Porterville and the north and south county mobile units will continue to serve consumers as a part of Tulare County mental health services.

For more information on mental health and alcohol and other drug services, visit www.tchhsa.org.

FHCN Receives $726K Grant for New Health Center in Terra Bella

STAFF REPORTS

Family HealthCare Network (FHCN) has received a grant from the Health Resources Services Agency in the amount of $726,694 for its new community health center in the community of Terra Bella. The center will be located at 9416 Road 238, and is set to open its doors on December 30.

The new 4,200-square-foot facility will include six exam rooms and three dental operatories. Services will include family medicine, adult and children's dental care, behavioral health, nutrition and health education. Assistance for residents to enroll in new health insurance options will also be offered.

"Family HealthCare Network is thrilled to have this opportunity to offer these health services to the community and to be awarded these funds to expand access to health services," said Kerry Hydash, FHCN president and CEO.

FHCN's new community health center in Terra Bella was selected as one of 236 community health center projects across the country that will receive funding to expand access to comprehensive, culturally competent, quality primary health care services.

The project has been in development for the last 18 months. Construction began for the new facility in mid-August, and will be completed in early December.

Family HealthCare Network's Terra Bella community health center is scheduled to open on December 30.

"We were very fortunate to have the support of the Terra Bella School District, the community members of Terra Bella and the Tulare County Board of Supervisors that helped make this project happen," added Hydash.

FHCN is a private nonprofit organization that operates federally qualified health centers. It currently operates 16 sites, 12 of which are community health centers in Tulare and Kings counties. Family HealthCare Network is recognized by the National Committee for Quality Assurance as a Level 3 Patient Centered Medical Home and dually recognized by The Joint Commission with its Gold Seal of Approval for Patient Quality and Safety and as a Patient Centered Primary Medical Home.

For more information, including how to schedule appointments on the center's opening day, call 1-877-960-3426. For more information about FHCN, visit www.fhcn.org.

VTEC High School Recognized with Statewide Education Honor

STAFF REPORTS

Visalia Unified School District will receive a Golden Bell Award for Visalia Technical Early College (VTEC) at a ceremony on December 7. The award, sponsored by the California School Boards Association (CSBA), recognizes public school programs that are "innovative and sustainable, make a demonstrated difference for students, and focus on meeting the needs of all students."

VTEC High School enrolls each of its 10-12 grade students into the specific Career Technical Education Pathway programs of their choice. Students graduate from VTEC college and career-ready as they complete a prescribed course of study within the agriculturally based program.

Pathways are aligned with industry standards and certifications, or community college certifications at the College of the Sequoias, and students enroll concurrently in high school and community college courses or industry-sponsored courses. The school environment provides a highly supportive combination of industry-relevant training and an early college experience with hands-on, project-based instruction that re-energizes disconnected students.

"The VTEC staff members are well deserving of this award," said VUSD Superintendent Craig Wheaton. "They have taken a concept and idea and created a fabulously successful school environment, one that engages and supports students in a way that results in high levels of achievement. It was heartwarming to see the first graduating class honored not only with a high school diploma but college credits as well!"

Experts from school districts and county offices of education made up the 11-member judging panel that reviewed the written entries and made the initial recommendations for the awards. On-site validators assessed the programs in action. This year's award will be given to 59 school districts and county offices of education that are helping students achieve through after-school programs, mentoring, instructional interventions, scheduling changes, use of data and other innovations.

CSBA is the non-profit education association representing the elected officials who govern public school districts and county offices of education. With a membership of nearly 1,000 education agencies statewide, CSBA brings together school governing boards and district and county office administrators to advocate for effective policies that advance the education and wellbeing of the state's more than 6 million school-age children.

For more information, visit www.csba.org.

Express Employment Professionals Hosts 'Pay it Forward' Drive

STAFF REPORTS

The Express Employment Professionals offices in Visalia and Fresno will host a Pay it Forward Hiring Drive to put 100 unemployed individuals to work this holiday season. The goal of this drive is to help give encouragement and purpose to as many job seekers as possible by providing them the opportunity to earn a week's worth of pay and help provide for their families during the holidays.

By joining Express in this hiring effort, employers will gain a qualified worker and give the gift of employment to an individual who would otherwise not work during the weeks of

December 2 and December 9. Express associates are screened and evaluated before being placed in short and long-term assignments in a variety of administrative, professional and commercial positions.

"Pay it forward to us means working with local businesses to help find jobs for unemployed workers in our community so they can earn a paycheck and help support their families this season," said Kris Brokaw, owner of the Visalia and Fresno Express offices. "Our vision is to lock arms with businesses in Tulare, Kings and Fresno counties to bring hope to local families for the holidays."

This program will provide businesses with the additional support often needed during a busy time of the year while helping someone provide for their family.

Companies and individuals interested in participating in the Pay it Forward Hiring Drive can call the Visalia or Fresno Express offices at 738-7822 for more information.

The Visalia and Fresno Express Employment Professionals franchises serve the Tulare, Kings and Fresno County areas with temporary/contract help and direct hire employees in a variety of fields, including administrative, skilled commercial, industrial, data processing, technical, sales, marketing, medical and more.

Express is on a mission to put a million people to work annually. Worldwide, Express put more than 367,000 people to work in 2012 with more than 600 offices in the U.S., Canada and South Africa. Express provides expertise in evaluation hire, temporary staffing, professional search and human resources and works across a wide variety of industries. Temporary staffing sales for the international staffing franchise company totaled more than $2.3 billion in 2012.

The Visalia and Fresno offices are currently accepting applications. For more information, call 738-7822 or visit www.expresspros.com

Alcoa Foundation Awards Family Services $20,000 Grant

STAFF REPORTS

Alcoa Foundation awarded Family Services of Tulare County a $20,000 grant to help foster economic empowerment in survivors of domestic violence and homelessness. Family Services will use the grant to implement a job readiness and financial management curriculum with residents at its Karen's House emergency domestic violence shelter and its Supportive Housing program.

Residents enrolled in the program will also be paired with a case manager who will provide individualized support, assist with personal and professional goal-setting, and help residents apply lessons learned in workshops to their daily employment search.

"Access to financial and job readiness education is particularly important to survivors of domestic violence," said Caity Meader, executive director of Family Services. "Gaining power and control over an intimate partner is at the core of domestic violence, and abusers often employ financial abuse tactics to entrap a victim in the relationship."

Financial abuse can include such tactics as: allotting an allowance, hiding family assets, running up debt, interfering with the partner's job or education, and ruining credit. According to the National Network to End Domestic Violence, research indicates that 98% of survivors of domestic violence have experienced some form of financial abuse. As a result, survivors are left without a source of income, a high level of debt, ruined credit scores and lowered levels of confidence in managing money or seeking employment. Learning skills in budgeting, accessing public benefits and managing debt can be critical to assisting survivors in gaining safety and long-term security for themselves and their children.

"Domestic violence survivors should not have to face the impossible decision of living with abuse or leaving and possibly facing poverty or homelessness," said Meader. "With Alcoa Foundation's investment, Family Services will equip survivors with lifelong skills that provide an alternative."

Karen's House Domestic Violence Shelter and Supportive Housing program serve more than 325 men, women and children annually.

The mission of Family Services is to help children, adults and families throughout Tulare County heal from violence and thrive in healthy relationships. Family Services has operated as a nonprofit organization for more than 30 years and helps more than 3,000 men, women and children in need annually by providing the following services:

- Karen's House emergency shelter for women and children escaping domestic violence
- More than 40 units of supportive housing for victims of abuse or families living with disabling conditions
- Free or low-cost mental health services
- Supervised visitation and safe exchange services for families in conflict
- Rape crisis hotline and advocacy for survivors
- No-cost parenting classes
- Emergency support for individuals living with HIV/AIDS and their families

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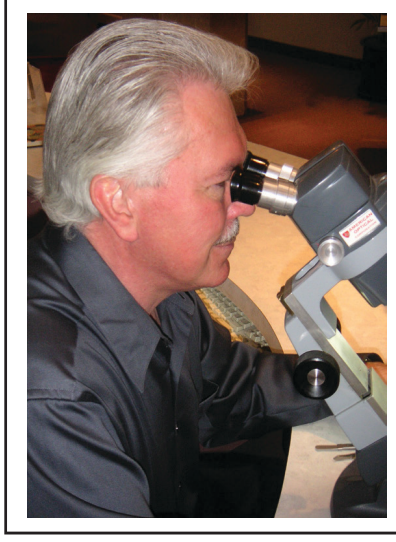
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DUI Checkpoints in California: Know Your Rights

SCOTT SUGARMAN AND CHRIS CANNON

DUI checkpoints are used in many states throughout the country, including California. The California Office of Traffic Safety recently issued a grant to The Hanford Police Department aimed at reducing deaths and injuries connected to drunk driving. According to a report in The Fresno Bee, the grant included money to help cover the cost of driving under the influence (DUI) checkpoints. In California, the Highway Patrol and local law enforcement agencies establish and operate DUI checkpoints.

The Fourth Amendment of the United States Constitution generally prohibits a law enforcement officer from stopping a driver without some specific evidence that the driver is violating the law. However, both the United States Supreme Court and California Supreme Court have upheld the legality of brief detentions of drivers at checkpoints to determine if the driver is driving under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs.

ARE THEY PRODUCTIVE?

Checkpoints are common in California. The Governors' Highway Safety Association states that California conducts over 2,500 checkpoints every year. Proponents of DUI checkpoints argue DUI checkpoints deter drunk driving and result in safer roadways by removing dangerous drivers before they cause an accident.

In fact, checkpoints are less effective than other law enforcement tools. Research has found that "saturation patrols," which use officers on patrol to focus specifically on signs of drunk driving, are more effective than checkpoints. The American Automobile Association's (AAA) DUI Justice Link states that these patrols are more likely to remove the most dangerous drivers from the road since these drivers can, and do, avoid checkpoints.

ARE THEY A VIOLATION OF CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS?

In 1990, a divided United States Supreme Court in Michigan Dept. of State Police v. Sitz, 496 U.S. 444 (1990) ruled that detaining all drivers at a DUI checkpoint did not violate the Fourth Amendment if the officers only briefly stopped each driver - for only 25 seconds in that case - and conducted the checkpoint according to previously established guidelines. The California Supreme Court in People v. Banks, 6 Cal. 4th 926 (1993) similarly upheld the legality of sobriety checkpoints, and specifically found that law enforcement agencies need not publicize in advance the placement of such a checkpoint. However, it is important to note that ten years after Sitz, the United States Supreme Court held in City of Indianapolis v. Edmond, 531 U.S. 32 (2000) that the Fourth Amendment prohibited similar car checkpoints for the purpose of preventing drug crimes.

DUI DEFENSES ARE AVAILABLE

Even though the sobriety checkpoints may be legal in the abstract, it is clear under the decisions of both the California and United States Supreme Courts that any particular checkpoint must be operated in a reasonable manner and accordance to neutral guidelines. If not, any evidence gathered during the stop may be suppressed and not admissible in court. This could lead to a reduction or even dismissal of charges. Further, if officers extend the brief detention allowed under those court decisions, the prosecutor will have to show good cause for any further police investigation and/or search of the vehicle.

If you have been charged with driving under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs and feel your rights were violated during a stop at a sobriety checkpoint, defenses may be available. Contact an experienced attorney knowledgeable in the defense of individuals charged with driving under the influence and familiar with the constitutional limitations on sobriety checkpoints.

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Porterville College honored 38 Fire Academy cadets on November 14.

Porterville College Fire Academy Graduates 38 Cadets

STAFF REPORTS

Porterville College honored 38 cadets at the Firefighter 1 Academy Class #30 graduation, held in the PC gymnasium on November14.

Cadets Fernando Avila and Enrique Suarez were recognized for serving as the class "Battalion Chiefs." In addition to completing all other training and study required of Fire Academy cadets, the class battalion chiefs assume the additional responsibility of maintaining class decorum, lining the class up for inspection each day, assigning equipment set-up tasks, leading the class in all classroom and field training activities and assisting the instructional staff as needed. Avila is a Marine veteran who, following his recent military discharge, has decided to pursue firefighting as a career. Suarez has been a seasonal firefighter for Cal Fire for seven years.

Recognition was also given to six cadets for serving as "Company Captains" under Avila and Suarez. They are Taigar Cho, Conner Collins, Andrew Eggleston, Allegra Fritz, Melinda Marcak and Nicholas Sauceda.

Each year, by secret ballot, the cadets select a class member who they feel goes "above and beyond the call of duty" in assisting others with hands-on skills practice, classroom study or in other ways during the difficult and rigorous 15-week academy. Juan M. Martinez was overwhelmingly selected for the "Class Leadership" award by his fellow cadets.

Per state fire marshal rules, all cadets in the SFM Accredited Fire Academy must score at least 80% on each written examination and there is much competition among cadets to have the highest overall score at the end of the academy. Receiving the "Top Score" award this year was Remington Pipkin with an overall score of 98%.

Current members of the Visalia Police Department's Volunteer in Police Service program.

Visalia Police Department Seeks Citizen Volunteers

STAFF REPORTS

The Visalia Police Department will be accepting applications for its Volunteer in Police Service (VIPS) program starting December 15. This program gives citizens the opportunity to serve their community while becoming part of the Visalia Police Department family.

Prospective volunteers will receive training during a 10-week academy that starts in May 2014. The individuals selected to attend the VIPS Academy will have the opportunity to ride with – and learn from – officers during their patrol shift. Prospective VIPS will receive training in a variety of areas from report writing to traffic control.

All classes are held at the Visalia Police Department Headquarters on Thursday night from 6-9pm. Training is conducted by Visalia Police Department personnel. The academy will culminate with a graduation ceremony in week 11. The chief of police will present certificates of participation, and members will be sworn in as "Volunteers In Police Service."

Those interested in becoming VIPS volunteers are encouraged to obtain an application at Visalia Police Department Headquarters, 303 S. Johnson St., Visalia. Completed applications will be accepted at the front counter.

Visalia Marketplace Owners Face Takeover Battle

STEVE PASTIS

Strategic Realty Trust, Inc. (SRT) a San Mateo-based company that owns 19 shopping centers including Visalia Marketplace on West Noble Avenue in Visalia, is facing a proxy battle between its founder and its current board of directors.

Tony Thompson, who started the company as the TNP Strategic Trust in 2009, was removed as co-CEO and president in August. He recently created the STT Shareholders Coalition and is calling for a special shareholders meeting, "to protect our investment in SRT," claiming that, "the current board of directors have adopted a number of tactics to entrench themselves."

"In addition to their self-preserving legal maneuvers, we believe the current board is using your SRT money to prevent a shareholder's meeting where they will be held accountable through an election," states a November 13 press release supportive of Thompson's efforts. "Don't let the current board distract you with confusing and false claims that TNP and Tony Thompson are trying to 'take control' of SRT. Mr. Thompson has already announced he will resign and we appreciate his willingness to retire from the board of directors."

The release criticizes recent company decisions. "Their poor judgment and inaction created the defaults on the Torchlight loan and Key Bank Line of Credit. Their actions… cost SRT shareholders millions of dollars in equity and the discontinuation of our 7% distribution." The release also claims that SRT's special committee directors "put themselves in the position of making SRT their personal piggy bank."

Visalia Marketplace

In an October 31 letter, Andrew Batinovich, SRT president, commented on "materials from Tony Thompson and his group seeking your support in his campaign to take control of your company." The letter states, "The Financial Industry Regulatory Authority, FINRA, accused Mr. Thompson of securities fraud and other violations of the federal securities laws and FINRA's rules. Mr. Thompson paid fees to himself before they were earned, causing our auditors to refuse to accept certifications signed only by Mr. Thompson. After our auditors discovered the wrongful payments, Mr. Thompson sought to have our auditors fired.

"With his financial problems mounting, Mr. Thompson collected a significant fee of $775,000 by recommending and effecting an ill-advised investment in the Lahaina Gateway Center that led to violations of loan covenants, forcing us to cease dividend payments under the terms of our credit agreement and costing your company millions of dollars."

Batinovich described Thompson National Properties (TNP) as "apparently insolvent, with a 2012 negative net worth of over $40 million based on FINRA's investigation."

On November 1, SRT announced that it had elected to be governed by all of the provisions of the Maryland Unsolicited Takeover Act (MUTA) "to protect stockholders from a hostile takeover attempt of SRT by Mr. Thompson."

"Mr. Thompson's hostile takeover threats have had, and will continue to have, negative impacts on the day-to-day operation of the company," explained Batinovich. "Our costs will increase dramatically as a result of the expenses associated with defending against his takeover attempt."

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Local Motion Awards Presented

STAFF REPORTS

Mike Winton, Omni-Means, receives the Outstanding Road Project award for Betty Drive.

The third annual Local Motion Awards were presented at a luncheon at the Visalia Convention Center. The event was coordinated by the Tulare County Association of Governments (TCAG).

The following awards were presented:

- Sustainability, which recognizes a project or plan that promotes the conservation of built and natural resources, exhibits long-term sustainability and promotes smart growth principles, went to Dinuba Transit Center.
- Economic Development, for the transportation project that best promotes economic growth in the region by improving access to employment centers or improving goods movement, was presented to the Plaza Drive Interchange.
- Transit, recognizing the project that most improves transit services or access to transit in the region, went to Woodlake Transit Center.
- Bike or Pedestrian Project, for the project that most improves walkability, transportation or access for bikes or pedestrians, was given to St. John's River Walk, Visalia.
- Outstanding Road Project, recognizing the road project that most improves mobility, connectivity and access in the region, was Betty Drive/Avenue 312.
- Outstanding Citizen, honoring a citizen who has shown dedication and leadership in the area of transportation, went to Brian Kempf, Urban Tree Foundation.
- Outstanding Elected Official, recognizing an elected official who has shown dedication and leadership in the area of transportation, was presented to Tulare County Supervisor Allen Ishida.
- Outstanding Public Employee, presented to a public employee who has shown dedication and leadership in the areas of transportation, planning and/or project management, was given to Richard Tree, City of Porterville.
- An Honorable Mention for Outstanding Partnership was presented to the City of Porterville and Caltrans District 6.

The event was made possible by support from sponsors, including Quad-Knopf, Omni-Means Engineers and Planners, Mendoza Associates, TRC Solutions, CivicPlus, Peters Engineering Group, Mark Thomas & Company, and KRC Safety.

Sequoia Mall

Continued from p. 1

unlikely because of the permitting process. The other approving parties would most likely object to such a permit. Whatever he does, Paynter needs to get Sears and Hobby Lobby's permission first. In addition to their approval, the changes would also have to comply with the property's Covenants, Conditions, and Restrictions (CC &Rs).

According to the *Visalia-Times Delta*, the mall is approximately 60 percent empty. Taking a stroll through the mall would suggest that the vacancy rate is closer to 70 percent, but that doesn't take into account that Regal Cinemas occupies almost one third of the enclosed portion and that Paynter now also owns the Tower Plaza occupied by Bed Bath and Beyond and Marshalls. The In-Shape building was also part of the purchase.

For the time being Paynter Realty and Investments Inc. is keeping active their seventeen current leases. The few businesses left at the mall received a letter the day after escrow closed advising them of the change in ownership and a copy of their assignment of lease and rents. All rents and payments are now to be paid to Caldwell Mooney Partners I, L.P. , a California Limited Partnership. The current on-site management team is staying with the property and the tenants were instructed to direct all inquires of operation or maintenance to Diane Sherrill or Eduardo Sanchez.

Paynter Realty and Investments is credited with the successful development of two Visalia properties: Park Place Promenade, anchored by Ross and Kohl's, and Gateway Plaza where Dick's Sporting Goods opened last year.

VUSD: 'Like' Us, Follow Us!

CRAIG WHEATON, ED.D., VUSD SUPERINTENDENT

Craig Wheaton

The Visalia Unified School District has a long tradition of positive parent involvement. A number of years ago, the VUSD School Board adopted the "Parent Partnership Statement," which was developed by a diverse committee of VUSD parents. It states, "We believe a positive partnership between parents and school staff is essential to a student's success in school." Communication is the key to a strong partnership, and VUSD is taking steps to keep an open line of communication with parents and the community at large.

The board of trustees recognized that social media and other technology are tools that could be used to improve communication about school and district events, and adopted a specific district goal for this year:

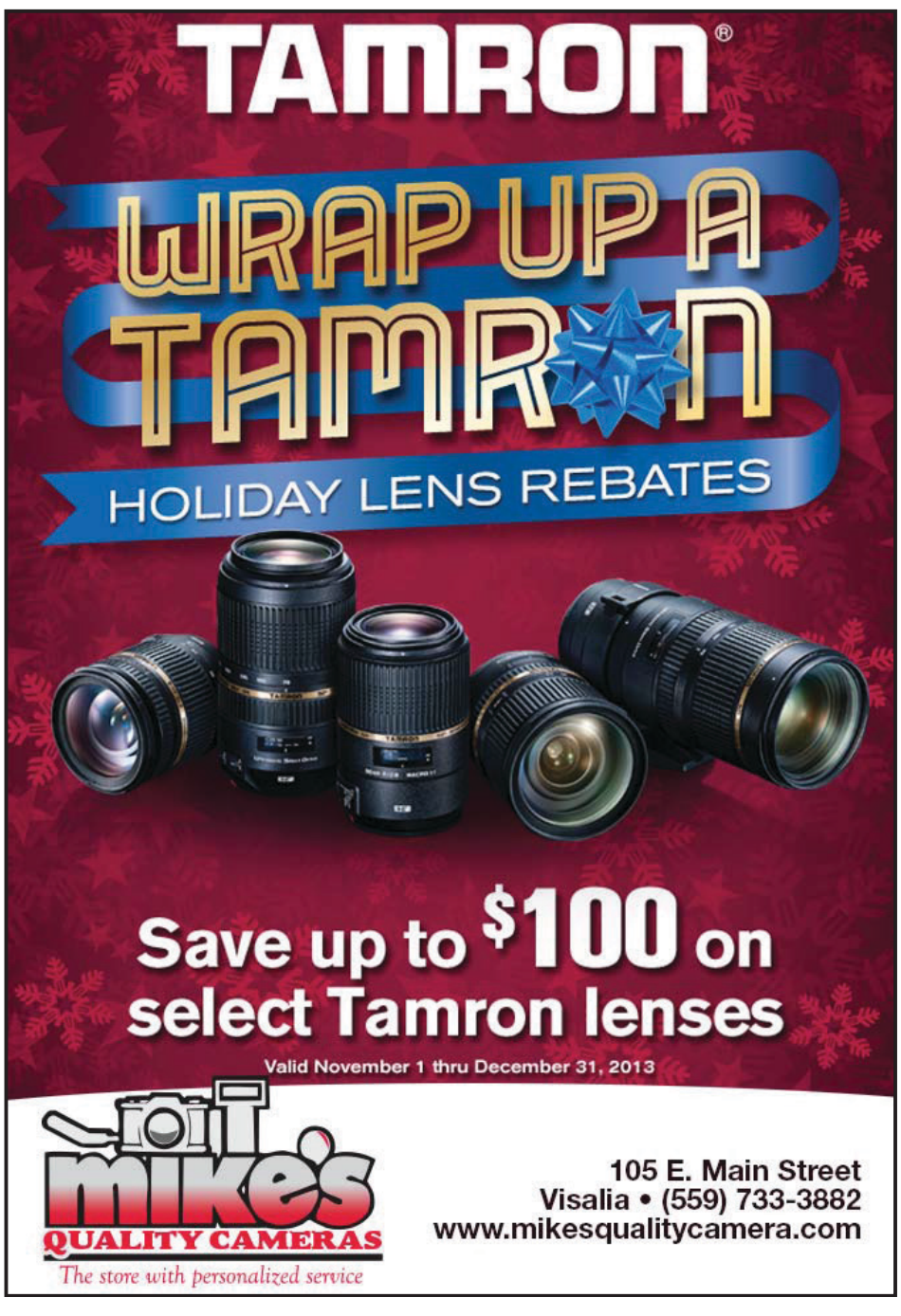
Goal 4.4 Expand the use of social media and other technology tools to inform parents, staff and the community of current school and district events and information

For several years, VUSD has published an email newsletter, Community Newsline, and regularly published "Board Meeting Highlights" to keep everyone informed on important topics in the district. We have just added additional ways for parents to keep up on important VUSD news.

Recently, VUSD quietly kicked off a new Facebook page and it is now time to go public! We believe that we can greatly improve information and communication with our entire school community. Please visit www.facebook.com/VisaliaUSD and "Like" us! This will be a great way to keep up with what is going on in the school district.

That's not all! You may also follow us on Twitter: @VisaliaUSD

Both Facebook and Twitter links are on the VUSD website and at the bottom of all "Community Newsline" emails. Don't forget, the VUSD website (www.vusd.org) has always been a good place to check for updated information.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Do You Really Know What You're Eating?

GUEST COMMENTARY BY BARRY KLEIN

Most people don't realize what the majority of the food supply is about and they take for granted that what they are eating is safe to eat. If it can be found on the supermarket shelf, then it must be safe. Right?

Nope! Processed food, which can be found at the local grocery store, is not necessarily safe for various reasons. Is the government looking out for us? Not necessarily. It would be nice if they did, but many times they get caught up in what the corporations want (profits at any cost), and not what the people need to be healthy and have a healthy planet to live on.

Again, is what you're eating safe?

About 60% of processed food contains GMO's – genetically modified organisms – created in a lab by a large company, most notably Monsanto. The main reason these companies create these plants is to "feed the world."

Funny, everything was going pretty smoothly prior before. Why do they feel the need to do this lab work and say what they say? It is to control profits and the food supply. Within the past year, Monsanto admitted they want 100% control of the seed supply. Need I say more?

Genetically engineered plants are not natural and our bodies are not designed for these foods. They are constantly being found to cause health problems with farm animals and in human consumption. I have yet to read anything positive on GMO plants – unless it is generated by the corporation itself.

Another issue here is cross-contamination from GMO plants to non-GMO plants, which has cost many farmers tens of thousands of dollars in crop losses and lawsuits by Monsanto. (Read up on Saskatchewan farmer Percy Schmeiser and you will learn a lot.)

Please note the following crops which are used widely and their percentage of genetic modification: corn 86%, soy 93%, cottonseed 93%, canola 90%, sugar beets 95%, Hawaiian papaya 80% and 25,000 acres of zucchini/squash.

Herbicides, Fungicides, Pesticides and Fertilizers

Whether for residential or farm use, synthetic petroleum-based herbicides, fungicides and pesticides and fertilizers are quite pervasive and persistent in our environment. Many non-organic crops have these chemicals sprayed on them to control insects, molds, fungus and weeds.

Yes, sometimes there may be an emergency situation when one of these might be needed, but typically, there are natural ways of dealing with these issues. One of the main problems with these chemicals is that they are hormone disruptors in all life forms. For example, pesticides have a structure that resembles estrogen and can get into the estrogen receptor site of a human and cause imbalances that might lead to health issues, particularly in women who are estrogen dominant. This is outside of the direct negative impact of the chemical itself.

One way to keep plants healthy is to have healthy soil. The healthier the soil is, using safe and natural amendments, the healthier the plants are and the better the chance of them staying healthy, just like our bodies!

The synthetic petroleum-based chemicals are an environmental hazard and farming cannot continue this way if we are going to have a healthy earth, society, water, air and all forms of life. Also, synthetic fertilizers cause their own problems, such as dead zones (lack of oxygen) in the mouth of the Gulf of Mexico. We need a healthier earth!

Processed Foods

The ingestion of processed foods is promoting ill health. The reason being, when a food is processed, many of its nutrients are lost – the valuable nutrition that our bodies need for good health. When vitamins and minerals are added to this processed food, they are not in a form that the body uses well and some are synthetic. All of these are considered "fractional nutrients."

Our bodies are designed to recognize a vitamin or mineral in its complex form, like when you eat a fresh carrot. When we eat "whole foods," our bodies are nourished better and this increases our chances to stay healthy.

Again, as I said earlier, the issue of genetically engineered foods is unnatural to our bodies because we are not designed to ingest the altered structure. When you add the different negative affects GMO's are having on the body's health, such as sterility and disease, there are no good reasons to eat this kind of food. One thing you can do is to get to know the ingredients that are in your food. The internet should be quite helpful.

Food Grown Far from Home

When you eat food that is grown in faraway states and countries, you are eating old food, not the fresh food your bodies need! Within two days after harvest, food starts to lose its nutritional value. By the time this food makes it to the grocery store, it could already be 3-5 days old. By the time it gets to the shelf, it could be seven or more days old. Food grown in Chile can take 7-10 days to get to a U.S. port.

Many foods are picked "green" or unripened so that they are ripe when they get to the store. When food is not fully ripened on the tree/vine, it never acquires the full complement of nutrients that it was meant to have to nourish our bodies. In turn, there is a deficiency already in place that gets passed on to you, the consumer. Another issue is the amount of fuel burned to transport this food from far away instead of eating locally sourced foods. This spent fuel can affect the cost of the food and can negatively affect the health of the earth and our bodies. Also, it increases the need to drill for more oil.

These are just some reasons to be more careful about what you eat. I have spent years considering my choices and getting to know ingredients and the different forms of farming so I can empower myself with healthier decisions. The question is what do you want for yourself? Do you value the health of the earth and your body, which are connected? Do you love yourself enough to make the effort?

Just something to think about. My best suggestions as I have stated in a previous article, if you want to be healthy, shop locally such as a farmers' market and grow a garden, planting foods by using compost and other natural amendments. This might take more time from your schedule but the value is tremendous when it comes to your health.

Buon appetito!

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Hand Analysis Can Prove Insightful

CATHERINE DOE

We are each a soul living a human experience. Did you ever wonder what your soul's agenda is? All you have to do is look at your hands. Or have Kay Packard, founder of the American Academy of Hand Analysis, read your hands for you.

When Kay was 38, she woke up one day and asked herself, "Why am I here? Because this can't be it." It took five more years of searching, but after some friends encouraged her to get her hands read it changed her life.

"I was just blown away by what the hand reader told me about myself," she recalled. "I couldn't even articulate it."

She eventually quit her high-paying job as a project manager for Boeing and became a fulltime hand reader. "I'm not in it to make a million, but it is very fulfilling. There is nothing else I want to do in my life, especially those times when someone learns something new about themselves."

Our daughter, Mercedes, a freshman at Exeter High School, was eager to get her hands read, so we drove her up to Kay's Three Rivers studio to discover her life's purpose.

Kay starts by taking prints of both hands. Because we live in a right-handed world, even lefties use their right hand most often. Only one percent will predominately use their left hand, and Kay can tell because the left print will come out stronger. The right hand represents the person in the outside world and the left hand represents how they are at home.

Her analysis is based on both the physical hands and the small details that can be better seen on the prints. Living in Three Rivers could limit her clientele, but Kay does about 90 percent of her readings by long distance, either over the phone, Skype or on the computer. She sends the client a print kit, which is returned with their payment. Kay has thousands of prints and keeps an archive in case any client wants her to do a follow-up reading and compare any changes that might have happened in the hand's lines.

Kay starts the reading by examining her client's fingerprints. "I look at the fingertips to see what the soul's agenda is," said Kay.

Your fingerprints were formed when you were in the womb five months before birth and are unalterable from that point forward. She can't tell you when you will get married or how many babies you will have, but your fingertips can tell you what your soul wants to experience. She will be able to see what life's lessons will come your way and what challenges you will face. Coming to an understanding that struggles are really life lessons is what makes hand analysis such a transformative experience. A client's view can fundamentally change from negative feelings of sorrow and anger, to feelings of gratitude for their struggles.

Kay Packard studies the handprint of Mercedes Oldenbourg.

"Those struggles will ultimately strengthen your soul's purpose," said Kay.

The lines on your hand, such as the heart, life and head lines, and any markings that stand out like whorls, dots or stars, can reveal some of your talents, gifts and strengths. Your palm also reveals some of the challenges you are facing in life.

After letting her eye wander over Mercedes' hand, like looking through a forest and seeing what pops out, Kay revealed that Mercedes' life purpose was to be a teacher. This does not necessarily mean a teacher in the traditional sense but could mean being a mentor, guide or example.

"She is the go-to girl for information," Kay explained.

Service apparently is Mercedes' life path, and when she teaches in that line it is going to bring her great satisfaction. Mercedes will pursue three avenues of service: one to herself, a second to her family, friends and community, and a third to make the planet a better place. One of her biggest life challenges will be to keep these three areas of service in balance and not lose herself in the process.

One of Mercedes' biggest life challenges will be engaging in power struggles. People will try to have authority over her, or will be telling her what to do, and when. She will have to learn to stand her ground and decide for herself when, and how, she is going to be of service.

"By default, your little soul is a helper: reliable, dependable and capable of doing a great job," said Kay.

Another challenge for Mercedes will be to figure out when to jump into a relationship or when to stay back. She is also a healer, which ties into her teacher role, in the sense she has the capability to listen and give people good advice--leading them to be able to heal themselves.

The heart line, the first major line on your palm, reveals how you relate to people and how you like to be treated. Mercedes had a hermit heart line, which means she needs to have her own space, her own sanctuary. She needs to take her time to decide how she feels and needs to be alone with her thoughts. Surprises aren't her thing and loyalty is important to her. She won't have a large group of friends but a few very good ones.

The middle line on your palm is the head line, which represents your mental system. Mercedes' head line indicates that she is very creative and more emotional, which is in conflict with her hermit line. Kay advised journaling to relieve this conflict between the two.

The life line is the last of the three dominant lines on your palm. It does not indicate how long you will live but how vital your energy system is. A long clear life line means that you have good health and bounce back quickly if you get sick.

Other prominent features on Mercedes' hands were her girdles of Venus, the star of Apollo, and a peacock on her index finger, which meant she was sort of a maverick. Kay also looks at each finger and the shape of your hand. The dominant finger is the straightest and most prominent. The shape of the hand can be determined by taking off the thumb and determining if you have a square, pear or other-shaped hand.

Kay was emphatic when she said that anyone can learn to do hand analysis. It does take some intuition, but intuition develops by default after doing readings for awhile. Everything is a vibration, and hands are a vibrational imprint, so, "I'm not only looking at your hands but I am feeling them also." This intuition can develop by itself, but Kay's graduate program at the University of Santa Monica had techniques that helped her tap into her inner voice.

Kay just finished writing her first book, Your Life is in Your Hands, and is currently looking for a publisher. In it she reproduces 50 handprints so that readers can pick out markings similar to theirs and do their own mini-reading.

Whether teaching hand analysis through her book or trainings, Kay wants people to live a more profound and meaningful life. As she sees it, "the soul-print for anyone's life is locked in the skin carvings on the hands and most importantly the fingerprint patterns. How amazing is that?"

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Voters 'Stay the Course'

Another Visalia City Council election cycle has come and gone. The following contains a few observations from a wannabe political scientist that may be of help to future candidates.

I believe that the clear message from voters in 2013 was "stay the course." In 2009, there were ten candidates running for three open positions on our city council. Due to dissatisfaction with the economy locally and FEMA flood insurance, the 2009 incumbents were replaced by three new challengers. However, in 2013, with the local economy mending, the construction industry heating up again, and with many new businesses in-filling Mooney Blvd., there were only five candidates for the three open positions on the council, the three incumbents and two challengers.

At the outset, as an incumbent, I made certain strategic campaign decisions. Anticipating that there wouldn't be much media coverage, I determined to use the old "rope-a-dope" strategy of Mohammad Ali. Besides emphasizing the progress the city has made in the last four years, and my goals for the next four years if re-elected, I determined to lean back on the ropes and fend off the anticipated blows, rather than countering. While some soft jabs were landed, the campaign remained cordial throughout.

As a challenger four years ago, I found that I spent a tremendous amount of time fundraising. As an incumbent this time, I found that fundraising came much easier, particularly from the same supporters as before. I reused prior campaign signs, which not only was a tremendous cost savings, but allowed me to post my large signs earlier while the competition was still ordering theirs, although I did take quite a bit of good-natured ribbing for that strategy. I was determined to only spend about one-third of what I spent four years ago on advertising, mainly because as an incumbent, I already had the name recognition. Likewise, I took advantage of incumbency by attending as many special invitation events as I could, and speaking to community groups. In a good economy, the incumbent enjoys a distinct advantage, and thus I came up with the slogan that "we are better off than four years ago" to emphasize that.

As to the election itself, being an off-year election, I correctly anticipated that the turnout would be low. Additionally, most of those voters were the established "old Visalia" voters that can be counted on to turn out. Again, a low 20% voter turnout usually favors the incumbents. Even the mail-in balloting was an advantage, since 70% or more voted in advance of the November 5 election day. This allowed me to target my advertising in late September and early October, geared towards the early voters. Taking advantage of essentially a free website and Facebook page, I put the details of my campaign and platform on that. I was able to downsize my advertising print budget and refer voters to those online resources.

A little luck also came into play. Candidates' names are not placed on the ballot in alphabetical order. Instead, the Secretary of State earlier in the year did an alphabet drawing to determine what order names would appear on ballots throughout the state, based upon the first letter of the last name of each candidate. Of course, the letter "G" was drawn first, meaning my name appeared first on the ballot with the word "incumbent" following it. I've heard that having your name first on the ballot translates into a bump in votes.

I also determined to pay for a candidate's statement to be published by the Tulare County Election's office and distributed with the ballots. This has become more expensive each year, this time costing $3,800.00! For that reason, only two of the five candidates for city council had a candidate's statement. While I believe this to be a publicity advantage, I felt that the county's brochure was undersized and somewhat difficult to read for the price. Based upon the increasing cost trend, this campaign tool may be used less in the future.

As to small campaign yard signs, I tried to get those distributed in neighborhoods, rather than on major arterials. I believe that yard signs within neighborhoods are much more effective, and cause neighbors to talk to each other to discuss the candidates. There you have it, my top secret election strategy and post-election analysis. Congratulations to the incumbents who are back in office for another four years, as well as to the challengers for running a good race. Thank you to all Visalians who got involved with sign distribution, attended candidates forums, educated themselves on the candidates and issues, and voted. I've heard it said that government is not run by a majority of the people; rather it is run by a majority of the people who participate.

— Council Member Warren Gubler

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SEND YOUR LETTERS TO:
editor@ourvalleyvoice.com

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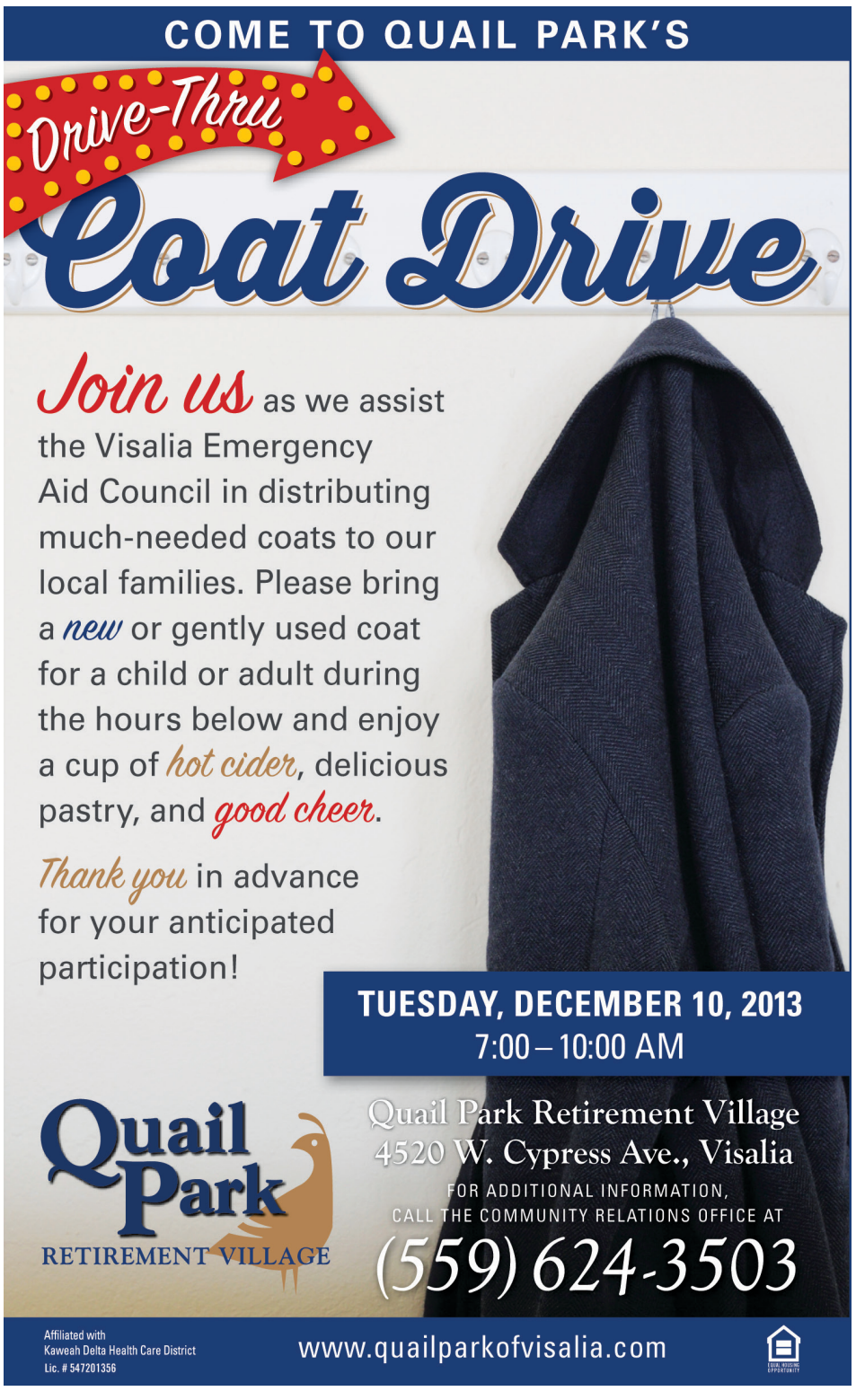
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The Annual Candy Cane Lane Parade annually attracts 30,000 to downtown Visalia.

Candy Cane Lane Parade Launches Downtown Visalia Holiday Season

Downtown Visalia's 68th Annual Candy Cane Lane Parade, set for 7-9pm on Monday, December 2, will kick off the holiday season in downtown Visalia.

The parade will run along Main Street from Liberty to Conyer, and be held rain or shine. A crowd of 30,000 is expected to line the route of this annual event.

This year's theme is "The 12 Days for Christmas," and the parade will be led by Grand Marshal Laurie Isham, escorted by the Goshen Mounted Police, and feature Santa Claus arriving in his carriage, sponsored by Family HealthCare Network.

In December, Downtown merchants will be making Thursday nights into "Family Night Out" by staying open until 8pm. Carriage rides along Main Street and Center, sponsored by Suncrest Bank and Downtown Rookies, will be available for $5, as will be photos with Santa, sponsored by On Site Security.

On December 5, the Visalia Fox Theatre will present "102 Dalmatians." Tickets are $3.

For more information, visit downtownvisalia.com.

'Winter Dance Party' Brings Holly, Valens, Big Bopper to Visalia

The 1950s will live again when Buddy Holly, Ritchie Valens and the Big Bopper take the stage at the Visalia Fox Theatre.

John Mueller's "Winter Dance Party" is the official live and authentic re-creation of Holly, Valens and the Big Bopper's final tour, and the only show endorsed by the Holly, Valens and Richardson estates. The concert performance will include over two hours of high voltage entertainment featuring such hit songs of the 1950s as "That'll Be the Day," "Peggy Sue," "Oh, Boy," "Rave On," "La Bamba" and "Chantilly Lace."

Mueller, the critically acclaimed former star of the U.S. touring version of the London/Broadway hit musical "Buddy: The Buddy Holly Story," performs as Holly, and Linwood Sasser fills the legendary footsteps of the Big Bopper. Ray Anthony, a star of the "Legends of Rock and Roll" show at the Imperial Palace in Las Vegas, performs as Valens. The four-piece band includes Grammy Award-winning Mike Acosta on saxophone.

The Winter Dance Party show has performed in front of over 2 million people on national TV for the Jerry Lewis Telethon, and has toured extensively throughout the United States and Canada at theaters, performing arts centers, ballrooms, corporate events, casinos and even the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame along with John Mellencamp, Marshall Crenshaw and others.

John Mueller as Buddy Holly

Other highlights have included receiving the keys to the city of Green Bay from the mayor, playing in the legendary Surf Ballroom on the same day Buddy, Ritchie, and the Big Bopper did 40 years prior, and performing on stage with Maria Elena Holly (Buddy's widow), Niki Sullivan (an original member of the Crickets, Holly's original band) and Tommy Allsup (original Winter Dance Party guitarist and Nashville producer).

For tickets or more information, visit www.foxvisalia.org.

LeAnn Rimes to Headline Eagle Mountain Casino in December

LeAnn Rimes

LeAnn Rimes, who has sold more than 40 million albums and won two Grammy Awards, three Academy of Country Music Awards and 12 Billboard Music Awards, will take the stage for an 8pm show at Eagle Mountain Casino on Saturday, December 7.

Rimes is the youngest recipient of a Grammy Award, and was also the first country recording artist to win in the "Best New Artist" category. She has placed 42 singles on the Billboard Hot Country Songs chart, 13 of which were top 10 hits, and has scored numerous hit singles in her career, including "Can't Fight the Moonlight" which went #1 in 11 countries, and "How Do I Live," which is the second longest charting song ever on the Billboard Hot 100 chart.

Having released more than ten studio albums, three compilation albums and two greatest hits albums, her latest album, "Spitfire," her most personal to date, was released on June 4 and debuted at number nine on Billboard's Top Country Album chart and number four on iTunes. Rimes co-wrote nine of the album's songs and performed with guest vocalists Rob Thomas and Allison Krauss, among others.

Rimes is also an accomplished actress and author, including writing two children's books Jag and Jag's New Friend, as well as the novel Holiday in Your Heart and the inspirational book What I Cannot Change. She is currently filming an upcoming show with husband, Eddie Cibrian, to air on Vh1 in 2014.

Rimes has long supported a variety of charity organizations, including advocating for the National Psoriasis Foundation, the Coalition to Salute America's Heroes and StandUp For Kids. She most recently began work with The Trevor Project, an organization that provides crisis intervention and suicide prevention services to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning youth, as well as with the Friend Movement, an anti-bullying organization.

For tickets or more information, visit www.eaglemtncasino.com.

Annual Christmas Tree Auction to Offer Free Sneak Peek

The Christmas Tree Auction, hosted by the Visalia Chamber of Commerce, features entertainment, fine wine and food from more than 20 local restaurants and wine vendors – in addition to the auction of elaborately decorated trees.

A free sneak peek at the beautiful trees to be displayed at "The Giving Tree," the 33rd Annual Christmas Tree Auction, will be offered to the public between 2-4:30pm at the Visalia Convention Center on Friday, December 6. Volunteers have spent countless hours preparing these elaborately decorated trees to celebrate the season and help raise money for local non-profit organizations.

Hosted by the Visalia Chamber of Commerce, the 33rd annual Christmas Tree Auction later that evening will offer entertainment, fine wine, and delicious food from more than 20 local restaurants and wine vendors. For the last three decades, this event has been the primary fundraiser for many local charities. All of the benefiting charities depend on the generosity of donors to keep their operations running.

While the focus of this event continues to be on the trees and the charities, there will once again include a fully catered, sit-down dinner by Sue Sa's Creative Catering as part of the "VIP Experience" (5:30-11:30pm). The VIP ticket also includes the live tree auction, dancing, hors d'oeuvres and wine tasting. The live tree auction will take place during dinner. Tickets can be purchased from the Visalia Chamber of Commerce: $125 for the VIP ticket; $60 for general

Continued on p. 19»

The TCOE Theatre Company production of "Oklahoma!" stars Kaley McConnaughey, a freshman at Redwood High School, as Laurey, and Tiger Ricks, a junior at Eleanor Roosevelt Community Learning Center, as Curly.

'Oklahoma!' Comes to L.J. Williams Theater

This month, the Tulare County Office of Education Theatre Company will present four public performances of the classic American musical "Oklahoma!" Students have been working this semester to prepare this production of the high-spirited musical, which recently celebrated its 70th anniversary, having debuted on Broadway in March 1943.

"Oklahoma!" was the first musical written by the team of Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II. Popular songs from the musical include "Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin'," "Kansas City," "People Will Say We're in Love," "The Surrey with the Fringe on Top" and "Oklahoma!" The original Broadway production ran for an unprecedented 2,212 performances, later enjoying award-winning revivals, national tours, foreign productions and an Academy Award-winning 1955 film adaptation.

"The original Broadway production of 'Oklahoma!' solidified musical theatre as a permanent art form," says Brian Roberts, Theatre Company director. "The show has been loved by audiences everywhere ever since. The Theatre Company is delighted to celebrate the 70-year tradition of 'Oklahoma!' with our own energetic production, featuring an amazing group of Tulare County students."

Set in Oklahoma Territory outside the town of Claremore in 1906, the musical tells the story of cowboy Curly McLain and his romance with farm girl Laurey Williams. Tiger Ricks, a junior at

Continued on p. 24»

Kids' Festival Returns to Visalia Convention Center

The Kids' Festival offers fun for the whole family.

For the past 20 years, the sponsors of Kids' Festival, along with hundreds of South Valley organizations, programs and services, and thousands of visitors and families, have come together in the fall to present a festival devoted entirely to children. This year's Kids' Festival will be held Saturday, November 23, from 9am to 4pm at the Visalia Convention Center.

The signature sponsor of Kids' Festival is the Tulare County Office of Education, with Food 4 Less of Visalia the presenting sponsor. They will be joined by McDonald's restaurants, Visalia Unified School District, Kaweah Delta District Hospital, Pena's Disposal Service, Educational Employees Credit Union (EECU), and a host of dance schools, exhibitors and food vendors to present a uniquely family-oriented fun day.

The 2013 Kids' Festival will offer continuous entertainment featuring talent from Porterville, Exeter, Tulare and Visalia. The Riata Ranch Cowboy Girls will be returning as a headliner, with a full array of local talent. They will be joined by Farley's Tae Kwon Do, 4-H, the Boy Scouts, the Redwood Robotics Club and Summit Charter Academy of Porterville.

The American Traveling Show will feature carnival rides for the whole family, set up inside and outside the convention center. Other highlights include math and science exhibits, public safety displays, automotive exhibits and a robotics display.

For more information, call Nick Anthony at 740-4230 or visit www.kidsfestival2013.com. Discount tickets, made available by EECU, are available on the website.

Juni Fisher to Perform in Lindsay

The Lindsay Community Theater will host western singing artist Juni Fisher at a 7:30pm concert on Wednesday, November 27.

Fisher, who was born and raised in Strathmore, started out as a horse rider and trainer, but soon turned her talents to writing and singing songs about the cowboy and cowgirl way of life. In the last couple of years, the Western Music Association named her solo musician of the year, female performer of the year and entertainer of the year. This year, she is nominated for five more awards.

The Lindsay Community Theater is located at 190 N. Elmwood, in the heart

Juni Fisher

of downtown Lindsay. Tickets are $15 in advance and $20 at the door. For tickets or more information, visit lindsaycommunitytheater.primetix.com or call 284-2223.

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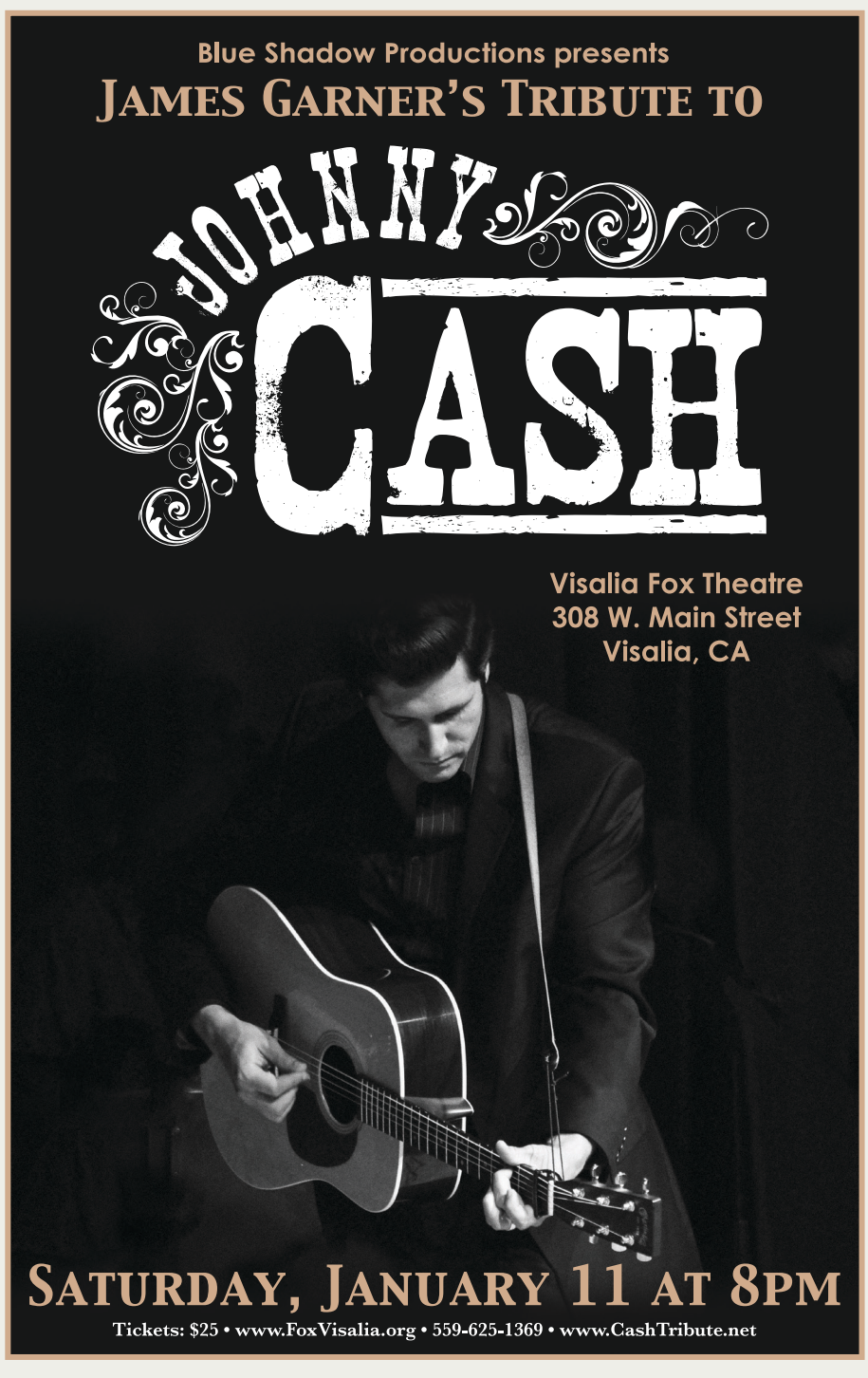
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Julianna Barwick Brings Her 'One-Woman Chorus' to Visalia

STEVE PASTIS

Julianna Barwick, who performs at The Cellar Door in downtown Visalia on November 27, has been called a "one-woman chorus," and her sound described as "Icelandic."

"I just try to make beautiful music," she told the *Voice*, explaining that she creates her choral sound by "looping" – recording one snippet of her voice and multiplying it. The result is a mellow, hypnotic sound that stirs emotions.

Julianna Barwick

"It's all emotional," said Barwick, a recipient of Pitchfork's 2013 Best New Music Award who has recently been opening shows for Iceland's Sigur Ros. "I always make the music spontaneously so it's very personal and emotional and of the moment. That's the only way I really know how to do this."

Her newest album, "Nepenthe," was entirely created when she was in Iceland. "There's something definitely happening there," she said. "The beauty of Iceland is inspiring and mood-altering. It's a stunningly beautiful place."

Sigur Ros collaborator Alex Somers produced the album at his studio in Reykjavik, the end result of "a random email" she received in 2011. "Alex and (Sigur Ros singer) Jónsi said they really liked my music and suggested that we work together," Barwick said. "I talked with Alex for about a year about producing. We became friends and the record came out this year. They were touring so I opened shows for them."

So what does "Nepenthe" mean and why did she pick it as the title of her album?

"I found it on a nerdy word blog," she said. "I just thought it was a pretty word. One of its definitions is a potion used by the ancients to induce forgetfulness of something painful or sorrowful."

Barwick's music seems provide a release for her own pain or sorrow. "It's beyond cathartic," she said, "so I'm glad I have this way to express these feelings."

Despite comparisons to Enya and Sigur Ros, Barwick said her main musical influence is soundtracks. "My dream collaboration would be John Williams ('Star Wars,' 'Jaws,' 'Raiders of the Lost Ark'). I like the epic quality of his soundtracks."

There is little difference between her performances to a large audience and intimate clubs like The Cellar Door. "My bandmate and I just performed last night in a teeny tiny gallery for 70 people," she said. "It was the same show that I did to open for Sigur Ros."

"Toweringly sublime yet invitingly human, her music has an uncanny power to transform whatever space it's played in," said Aaron Gomes of Sound N Vision Foundation, which is bringing Barwick to Visalia. "It can make a cramped apartment feel like a high-ceilinged cathedral."

"I've never been to Visalia and I'm looking forward to it," said Barwick, who lives in Brooklyn, before taking over the questioning to find out more about our city – such as where to stay, what to do.

Kicking off the night will be Fresno's new indie pop band The Actress Group.

Tickets for the 8pm. 21+ show are $10. For more information, visit snvfoundation.org.

'Love, Loss and What I Wore' stars: (l-r) Irene Morse, Kim Gunter, Melinda Hatfield, Donna Johnston and Mikki Verissimo.

'Love, Loss and What I Wore' Offers a Girls' Night Out

NANCY HOLLEY

"Love, Loss and What I Wore" can be a great girls' night out, a wonderful gift to the woman you love, or lots of laughs over how emotional we can get about a piece of clothing. Who doesn't have a favorite shirt, tie, dress or pair of shoes that you just cannot throw away?

Nora and Delia Ephron have brought to the stage through Reader's Theater an opportunity to laugh, reflect on relationships, and enjoy commonalities. Based on a best seller by Ilene Beckerman, as well as on the Ephrons' experiences, all the stories are about someone real, and as a result, are true to life.

The show had a very successful run in New York using a rotating cast of five women including Tyne Daly and Rosie O'Donnell among others. The five women portray a variety of characters; four take on multiple roles. From an actor's perspective, multiple roles are challenging and exciting, particularly in a Reader's Theater setting where the characters are brought to life through the dialogue rather than through props, costumes or settings.

Irene Morse (Gingy) loves the work of the Ephron sisters, but beyond that was intrigued by the play "because remembering an outfit takes you right back to that point in time. Women relate to their clothing on an emotional level."

Kim Gunter's enthusiasm for the play was hard to contain. "I saw the show in New York when it was new and loved it," she recalls. "Men and women were guffawing. It is like women opening their diaries to others." Gunter's vignettes include a Rosie O'Donnell story and one based on Nora Ephron.

Melinda Hatfield, who portrays strong, resilient women, describes the play as "going to lunch with your girlfriends. Guys will get an inside peek into what happens when women get together."

From the bratty Alex to Heather, who loves her high heels despite the fact that they kill her feet, Mikki Verissimo is having a wonderful time. "This is a show for anyone who loves theater and likes dialogue that creates relationships."

"I thought this play would be a hoot," quips Donna Johnston, who has not been disappointed. She loves telling the stories of others and working with this group of women, noting, "We have really melded."

The actors, along with director Samantha Muse and assistant director Sergio Garza, emphasize that "Love, Loss and What I Wore" is relevant to all generations. They love the venue of Reader's Theater as challenging and pure acting without the bells and whistles of set and sound.

On Sunday, December 1, after the matinee, a "talk back" will be hosted by Sharon DeCoux, a veteran Visalia Player. Audience members will have an opportunity for a behind-the-scenes look at the show and the opportunity to ask questions and interact with the actors.

"Love, Loss and What I Wore" runs for three weekends at the Ice House Theater at Race and Santa Fe in Visalia. Evening performances are at 7:30pm on November 22, 23, 29 and 30, and December 6 and 7, and matinees are at 2pm on November 24, and December 1 and 8. For tickets, visit www.visaliaplayers.org, or the Facebook page "Visalia Community Players," or call 734-3900.

Tulare Historical Museum Presents 'Art for the Holidays' through January 4

STAFF REPORTS

Main Gallery Artists will display their artwork at "Art for the Holidays" at the Tulare Historical Museum through January 4.

The exhibition features a variety of artists and media, including acrylic, oil, watercolor, photography, mixed media, ceramics, stained glass, gourds and baskets.

Artists include Betty Berk, Toni Best, Jeri Burzin, Deb Cook, Elsah Cort, Lonni Flowers, Laurie Gorman, Linda Hengst, Moni Mauch, Deb Nolan, Deanna Saldana, John Sundstrom, Sherley Tucker and Ginny Wilson. An artists' reception will be held on Friday, November 8, from 5-7pm

Main Gallery Artists is a virtual art gallery and mobile group of well-known local artists. The artists exhibit their work together, provide unique art as gifts, and help organizations promote their missions with art activities such as art shows, exhibits, fundraisers, art workshops and much more.

The museum is located at 444 W. Tulare Ave., Tulare, and is open from 10am to 4pm Thursday through Saturday. In addition to its regular hours, the museum is open the third Sunday of the month for free from 12:30 to 4pm, during the months of September to May. Admission is $5 for adults, $3 for seniors (55+) and Southern California Automobile Club members, $2 for students, and free for Tulare City Historical Society members and children under 5 years old.

For more information, call 686-2074.

Christmas Tree

Continued from p. 17

admission (7:30-11:30pm), which includes dancing, hors d'ouevres, and wine.

The Giving Tree, sponsored by the Groppetti Automotive Family, is the newest feature to the Christmas Tree Auction. Attendees can purchase Giving Tree opportunity tickets for $20. Each ticket will be entered into a drawing, and during the event the person whose ticket is drawn will be able to take home a glamorously decorated tree and will direct all of the ticket proceeds to the local charity of their choosing. Only 250 Giving Tree tickets will be sold.

To purchase tickets, call the chamber at 734-5876, or visit the chamber office, 220 N. Santa Fe St., Visalia.

Read and comment online
ourvalleyvoice.com

EVENT CALENDAR

MUSIC

November

November 21 – Cody Torres – 7-10pm
On Thursdays, singer and musician Cody Torres performs at Crawdaddys Visalia playing classic Country and Rock hits. For information, visit CrawdaddysVisalia.com.

November 22-23 – Keith and the Crawdads – 7-10pm
Every Friday and Saturday, Keith and the Crawdads are featured at Crawdaddys Visalia. For information, visit CrawdaddysVisalia.com.

November 22 – Run4Cover – 9pm
Run4Cover will return to the Cellar Door in Visalia. Cost is $6 for this 21+ show. For information, call 287-7067.

November 22-23 – The 2nd Floor Night Club – 10-2pm
Every Friday and Saturday, Crawdaddys Visalia's 2nd Floor Night Club features DJs and dancing to hip-hop, techno, disco and more. For information, visit CrawdaddysVisalia.com.

Nov. 23 – Celebrate the Harvest – 7:30pm
Thanksgiving is no longer just the beginning of the Christmas season. Tulare County Symphony Orchestra puts the focus on the great American holiday with a choral festival featuring favorite folk songs and hymns, performed by a combined choir. For more information, visit tcsymphonyleague.org.

November 23 – TCSO Divine Divas – 7:30pm
International guest violinist, Haik Kazazyan, returns to the The Tulare County Symphony Orchestra to play music from "Carmen" and other opera classics at the Visalia Fox Theater. Ticket prices range from $20 to 39.50. For information, visit tularecountysymphony.com.

November 23 – Deep Fryd Early Show – 8pm
Deep Fryd will be featured at the Cellar Door in Visalia. This is a 21+ show. For information, call 287-7067.

November 23 – Nightlife – 10pm
DJ Ren Rock from B95 and his crew will be featured at the Cellar Door in Visalia. Dress to impress. For information, call 287-7067.

November 26 – Salsa Tuesdays – 7pm
Every Tuesday night at The Cellar Door features beginner dance lessons at 8pm, music and dancing follows. Cover is $5 for this 21+ event. Partners not required. For information, call 287-7067.

November 26 – 3's A Crowd – 7-10pm
On Tuesdays, 3's A Crowd with Rosalinda Verde perform at Crawdaddys Visalia, 333 E Main Street. For information, visit CrawdaddysVisalia.com.

November 23 – Nightlife – 10pm
DJ Ren Rock from B95 and his crew will be featured at the Cellar Door in Visalia. Dress to impress. For information, call 287-7067.

November 26 – Salsa Tuesdays – 7pm
Every Tuesday night at The Cellar Door features beginner dance lessons at 8pm, music and dancing follows. Cover is $5 for this 21+ event. Partners not required. For information, call 287-7067.

November 26 – 3's A Crowd – 7-10pm
On Tuesdays, 3's A Crowd with Rosalinda Verde perform at Crawdaddys Visalia, 333 E Main Street. For information, visit CrawdaddysVisalia.com.

November 27 – Western Artist Juni Fisher – 7:30pm
The Lindsay Community Theater will host Western Artist Juni Fisher. Juni is nominated for five WMA Awards. For tickets, visit lindsaycommunitytheater.primetix.com.

November 27 – Julianna Barwick – 8-10pm
Juliana Barwick will be featured at the early show of The Cellar Door. For information, call 287-7067.

November 29 – Valdivia Dance – 7:30pm
Gerardo Ortiz will present Valdivia Dance at the Visalia Convention Center. Tickets, $40. For information visit ci.visalia.ca.us.

November 30 – Terra Bella – 8-10pm
Terra Bella with Ted Nunes of Richfield will return to the Cellar Door for the early show. Tickets at the door $10 for this 21+ concert. For information, call 287-7067.

December

December 6 – Talib Kwell with Planet Asie – 8:30pm
Talib Kwell with Planet Asie and Omar Aura & DJ Ren Rock perform at the Cellar Door for the early show. For information, call 287-7067.

Dec. 7 – College of the Sequoia's Choral Christmas Concert – 7:30pm
Tickets, $10, will be available at the door or by calling the COS Box Office at 730-3907.

December 9-12 – Annual Christmas Production
The Creative Center will present its Annual Christmas Production at the Jon Ginsburg Gallery Main Stage at 410 E. Race Avenue. For information, 733-9329.

Dec. 11 – Charlie Daniels Band – 7:30pm
No one can fiddle like the famed country music legend Charlie Daniels. The man responsible for "The South's Gonna Do it Again," "Long Haired Country Boy," and his signature song, "The Devil Went Down to Georgia," will appear at the Tachi Palace in Lemoore. Tickets go on sale on September 27, for $40, $60 and $85. For information, visit tachipalace.com.

EVENTS

November

November 21 – Visalia Chamber Ambassador Meeting - 8-9am
Visalia Chamber of Commerce will hold its Amassador Meeting at Visalia First Assembly, 3737 S. Akers Ave. For information, visit visaliachamber.org.

November 21 – Annual Gift Faire – 5-7pm
The Creative Center's Annual Gift Faire: Soup, Sip and Shop will be held in the Jon Ginsburg Gallery, 410 E. Race Avenue. For information, call 733-9329.

November 22 – Spelling Bee Sponsors Needed
The Kings County Office of Education is seeking sponsors for the Spelling Bee. The bee gives Kings County students the opportunity to qualify for the Scripps National Spelling Bee in Washington, D.C. For information, contact Dee Tricks, Spelling Bee Coordinator, KCOE Lemoore Service Center, 589-7074.

November 22 – Mousing Around – 8:30am
Tulare Public Library will hold a computer class on mastering the mouse. To register for book clubs or computer classes call 685-4503 or stop by the research and information desk.

November 23 – Community Thanksgiving Dinner – 5-8pm
A free community Thanksgiving dinner will be offered to the Tulare community at the Church of God, 159 South A Street, Tulare. For information, call 686-4361.

November 23-24 – Springville Ranch Christmas Boutique – 10am-3pm
Unique gifts by local artisans and farmers will be featured at Springville Ranch, 36400 Hwy 190. Photos with Santa Claus, Dutch oven cooking, art, pottery, handmade jewelry, quilts, aprons, woodwork, iron goods, antiques, baked items and candies and more featured. For information, visit springvilleranch.com.

November 24 – Tulare Host Lions Turkey Shoot
The Tulare Host Lions will hold its largest fundraiser, a Turkey Shoot at the Agricultural Expo grounds in Tulare. For information, contact Dan Neppel, 686-6483.

November 26-January 4 – 30th Annual Train Show – 10am-4pm
Santa is coming to the Porterville Museum at 257 North D Street, Porterville. The Museum is closed on Sundays. For more information, call 784-2053 or visit portervillemuseum.org.

November 26-January 4 – 30th Annual Train Show – 10am-4pm
Santa is coming to the Porterville Museum at 257 North D Street, Porterville. The Museum is closed on Sundays. For more information, call 784-2053 or visit portervillemuseum.org.

November 29 – Hanford Christmas Parade – 6pm
The Hanford Chamber of Commerce, the City of Hanford, Hanford Sentinel and Family Health Care Network sponsor the annual Hanford Christmas Parade. For information visit hanfordchristmas.org.

November 30 – Small Business Saturday
Small Business Saturday is held each year on the Saturday that falls between Black Friday and Cyber Monday. The concept is to encourage the growth of communities by shopping at local businesses. For information, contact your local chambers of commerce.

December

December 1 – Lemoore Tree Raising Ceremony & Community Food Drive – 12-4pm
Downtown Lemoore will host Hay Rides, Sarah Mooney Museum Tours, children's games and Santa before the official Tree Raising Ceremony begins at 2pm During the ceremony, the Lemoore Volunteer Fire Department will be honored. After the ceremony, fire truck rides will be featured. For information, visit lemoorechamberofcommerce.com.

December 1 – Exeter Hobbies Toys For Tots Race and Toy Collection – 12pm
Exeter Hobbies will host Toys For Tots race and collection. Doors open at 8am and racing begins at 12pm Spectators welcome. Toy Donations receive prize raffle tickets. For information, visit exeterhobbies.com.

December 2 – 68th Annual Candy Cane Lane Parade - 7-9pm
Downtown Visalia's 68th Annual Candy Cane Lane Parade will feature Laurie Isham, escorted by the Goshen Mounted Police, as the grand marshal. This year's theme is "The 12 Days for Christmas." For information, visit downtownvisalia.com.

December 4 – Sisterhood of Grace Ribbon Cutting – 10am
Visalia Chamber will hold a ribbon cutting for Sisterhood of Grace, 920 W. Main Street. For information, visaliachamber.org.

December 5 – Homeopathy First Ribbon Cutting – 11am
Exeter Chamber of Commerce welcomes Homeopathy First with a ribbon cutting at their new office at 216 E. Pine Street, above Pine Street Pediatrics. For information, exeterchamber.com.

December 5 – Porterville Christmas Parade – 7pm
Porterville's Annual Children's Christmas Parade kicks off the holiday season. The Rotary Club of Porterville, the City of Porterville, and the Porterville Chamber of Commerce have sponsored this community parade for over 50 years. For information, call the Porterville Chamber at 784-7502.

December 6 – Christmas Tree Auction
The 33rd Annual Christmas Tree Auction will feature a special "Giving Tree." The raffle winner will be able to select the charity of their choice as the recipient. The auction will be held at the Visalia Convention Center. For information, 734-5876. Tickets available at visaliachamber.org.

December 6 – Exeter Christmas Parade – 6:30pm
"All I Want For Christmas" will be the theme of the Exeter Christmas Parade held in Downtown Exeter. The deadline to register for a parade entry is November 26. Turn in applications to the City of Exeter Community Services. For information, call 592-5262.

December 6 & 13 – Peña Planetarium Double Feature – 6 & 7pm
Peña Planetarium will host "Christmas Traditions Around the World" and "Mystery of the Christmas Star." Admission: $4 adults, $3 children. Cash or check only. Tickets may sell out. Tickets include admission to both shows. No late seating after doors have closed. For information, 737-6334 or tcoe.org/planetarium.

December 6 – Lindsay Chamber of Commerce Awards Nomination Deadline
The deadline to nominate businesses, organizations and community members for the Lindsay Chamber of Commerce Awards is December 6. The awards will be presented at the Chamber's Annual Awards Banquet on January 25 at McDermont Field House. For nomination forms and sponsorship information, visit thelindsaychamber.com.

December 7 – Family HealthCare Network Annual Gala
The Family HealthCare Network Annual Gala will be held at the Visalia Convention Center. For sponsorship information, contact Dante Rosh at 737-4707.

December 7 – Spirit of the Holidays – 4-7pm
The 22nd Annual Spirit of the Holidays will feature wine tasting and a live Christmas tree auction at the Exeter Memorial Hall. Tickets, $50, are available at The Foothills, Sun-Gazette, The Bank of Sierra, Exeter Chamber, Nielsen & Associates Insurance, and from Kiwanis members.

December 8 – Old-Fashioned Christmas Open House – 1-4pm
Tule River Historical Society Museum in Springville will host a tour of the Museum and restored Murphy house, an authentically restored covered wagon, tack shop and blacksmith shop. Free refreshments, bake sale, jams and jellies, and caroling with special guests, Patty Torrey, Dutch Oven Cookers, and Mountain Men. Information, call 310-4689.

December 10 – Quail Park Drive-Thru Coat Drive - 7-10am
In an effort to assist the Visalia Emergency Aid Council in distributing much-needed coats to local families, Quail Park Village will collect new or gently-used coats at the Retirement Village, 4510 W. Cypress Ave., Visalia. Hot cider and pastry will also be available. For information, call 624-3503.

December 12 – An Avenue of Trees – 6-9pm
Hanford Chamber of Commerce presents the 17th Annual Charity Christmas Tree Auction in the Civic Auditorium. Twelve local charities will benefit. Cost of $50 includes dinner, hors d'oeuvres, dinner, music, silent and live auction. For information, call the chamber at 582-0483.

December 13 – Sweets With Seniors – 9am
Lemoore Recreation Department, Jaminson High School and the American Legion will host a holiday breakfast at the Civic Auditorium. Seniors will receive a free pancake, sausage and egg breakfast, enjoy entertainment by local students and finish the day with sweets provided by West Hills College. Information, visit lemoorechamberofcommerce.com.

December 14 – Tinsel Toy 5K and 1/2 Mile Run/Walk – 8am
The Visalia Runners will hold a 5K and 1/2 mile Run/Walk on at the Tulare Outlet Center. Proceeds will benefit Salvation Army (toys for needy children) and local cross county teams. Long-sleeved holiday-themed shirts go to all entrants. Christmas ornaments awarded to 5-year age-group winners. The kids can get their picture taken with Santa Claus. Registration information on www.visaliarunners.org.

December 14 – LREC Fruit and Tasting Display – 9am-12pm
Lindcove Research & Extension Center Fruit and Tasting Display will be held at the LREC Center, 22963 Carson Ave., Exeter. See and taste more than 100 citrus varieties that are grown at Lindcove. Horticulturist Dr. Mary Lu Arpaia will conduct a sensory taste test and Master Gardeners and UC Farm Advisors will answer questions from home gardeners and citrus connoisseurs.

December 7 – 2013 Lemoore Christmas Parade – 6pm
Christmas Around the World will be the theme of the annual Christmas parade in Lemoore. For information, 924-6401.

December 14-15 – It's a Model Railroad Christmas!– 6pm
The Visalia Electric Railroad Modelers and Historical Society will host this fun family activity at Sequoia Mall in Visalia, featuring model trains and all the details of many model train layouts, including several N Scale displays, the Club HO Scale display, and a sample of scenery under construction. There will be a raffle for a working HO Scale layout to start your own family hobby in model railroading. There is no charge. Hours: 10am – 8pm Saturday, 11am – 4pm Sunday. For more information, call 733-1196.

COMMUNITY

November

November 21 – Last Thursday Book Club – 6pm
The Last Thursday Book Club of Tulare Public Library will meet to discuss The Monuments Men by Robert M Edsel. This is the Next to Last Thursday, due to Thanksgiving. To register for book clubs or computer classes call 685-4503 or stop by our research and information desk.

November 21 – Sci-Fi Fantasy Club – 1pm
The Sci-Fi Fantasy Club, Tulare Public Library's newest book discussion group, will meet the last Saturday, for Up Against It by M. J. Locke. This is the Next to Last Thursday, due to Thanksgiving. To register for book clubs or computer classes call 685-4503 or stop by our research and information desk.

November 23 – Grocery Outlet Blood Drive – 10am-3pm
Employees of the Grocery Outlet will host a blood drive at 2323 S. Mooney Blvd., Visalia. All donors will receive a variety of discounts from Valley businesses for dining, recreation, entertainment, and services. For information, contact Steven Spelman at 739-2953.

November 23 – The Art & Science of Herbal Medicine – 3pm
The Center for Integrated Medicine will present a workshop on the concepts behind Chinese Herbology at the Center, 725 W. Main Street, Visalia. The workshop is free for patients and $15 for all others. Reservations are required, 625-4246

November 27 – Giving Thanks Luncheon – 11:30am-1pm
The Visalia Senior Center will give thanks to patrons and friends with a traditional Thanksgiving feast with live music. Tickets go on Sale November 1 at $3.50 for ages 55 and over and $4.50 for guests. For information, 713-4381.

December

December 1 – Zumbathon – 12-1:30pm
Downtown Lemoore will hold a Zumbathon canned food drive. Four canned food items are required to participate. For information, visit lemoorechamberofcommerce.com.

December 2 – Blood Drive – 8am-12pm
The Mt. Whitney High School Blood Drive will be held at 900 S. Conyer St., Visalia. For information and other drives contact the Visalia Blood Center at 302-1300.

December 3-19 – Get Moving With Zumba – 6:30-7:30 p.m
Get moving with Zumba and get fit while having fun. Zumba will take place Tuesday and Thursdays at Porterville College. Registration is $20. For more information on Community Education Classes call 791-2492 or visit www.portervillecollege.edu/community_ed.

December 4 – Blood Drive – 10am-3pm
The College of the Sequoias Blood Drive will be held in the COS Quad area, 915 S. Mooney Blvd., Visalia. For information and other drives contact the Visalia Blood Center at 302-1300.

December 5 – Blood Drive – 8:30 a.m-11:30pm
The United Parcel Service-Visalia Blood Drive will be held at the UPS Facility, 7401 W. Sunny View Ave., Visalia. For information and other drives contact the Visalia Blood Center at 302-1300.

December 5 – Blood Drive – 2pm-6pm
The Three Rivers Community Blood Drive will be held at The Three Rivers Memorial Building, 43490 Sierra Drive, Three Rivers. For information and other drives contact the Visalia Blood Center at 302-1300.

December 6-7 – Lemon Cove Holiday Bazaar
Sequoia Union PTC will host the Lemon Cove Holiday Bazaar Dec. 6 at the school, 23958 Ave. 324, from 1 to 4pm and Dec. 7 from 9am to 4pm. Local artisans, baked goods, kids crafts and specialty coffees are featured. For information, call 805-0987.

December 6 – Visalia Philatelic Society Annual Christmas Party – 6pm
The Visalia Philatelic Society Annual Christmas Party will be held at the Fellowship Hall of Grace Lutheran Church, 1111 S. Conyer Street. For information, call 686-5067 or 734-6353.

December 10 – Exeter Woman's Club Annual Christmas Luncheon – 11:30am
Members of the Exeter Woman's Club will have their annual Christmas luncheon at the Clubhouse, 201 Kaweah Ave. For information, call 592-6738 or visit exeterwomansclub.com.

December 12 – Holiday Gathering – 4:30pm
Visalia Senior Housing I, II, and III will hold its Annual Holiday Gathering at 3900 W. Tulare Ave., following the financial and board meetings. Wine and hors d'oeuvers will be served.

December 12 – Exeter Woman's Club Home Tour – 4:30-8pm
Exeter Woman's Club presents their 3rd Annual Christmas Home Tour featuring four beautifully decorated homes, live music throughout the evening, hot cocoa and snacks. Tickets are $15. For information, call 592-6738 or visit exeterwomansclub.com.

December 20 – Old Fashioned Christmas Luncheon – 11:30am-1pm
The Visalia Senior Center will host a lunch, fellowship and "glad tidings" with Christmas carols, activities and a Christmas luncheon. Special guests will perform. Tickets for the limited seating event go on sale December 2 at $3.50 for ages 55 and over and $4.50 for guests. For information, 713-4381.

December 21 – Sierra Traditional Jazz Club Christmas Party
The Sierra Traditional Jazz Club of Three Rivers will hold its annual Christmas Party at Three Rivers Memorial Building, corner of Sierra and Skyline drives. Bring finger food and snacks to share between sets. For information, visit jazzaffair.info.

January 9 – Philatelic Society Stamp Scramble – 6:15pm
Visalia Philatelic Society regular meeting and auction will also feature a Stamp Scramble at the Fellowship Hall of Grace Lutheran Church, 1111 S. Conyer Street. Doors open at 6:15. The meeting begins at 7pm with the auction starting at 7:30pm A raffle is held during each auction. For information, call 686-5067 or 734-6353.

See more events online

ourvalleyvoice.com

The Annual Children's Christmas Parade will be held in downtown Porterville on December 5.

Porterville Children's Christmas Parade to Celebrate 'Christmas Dreams'

The annual Porterville Children's Christmas parade will be held along Main Street, from Morton south to Olive, in downtown Porterville on Thursday, December 5, starting at 7pm. This year's parade theme is "Christmas Dreams" and over 90 entries will be featured. Three announcer locations are planned: in front of Porterville City Hall, the Porterville Chamber of Commerce office and the Elks Lodge.

The local U.S. Marines Toys for Tots Committee has a parade entry and will accept new, unwrapped toys as they progress along the route. A number of non-profit organizations will have food booths at street intersections along Main Street, offering a variety of refreshments, and local restaurants will offer parade specials as well.

The annual parade is sponsored by the Rotary Club of Porterville, the Porterville Chamber of Commerce and the City of Porterville. For more information, call the chamber at 784-7502.

'Spirit of the Holidays' Features Wine Tasting and Auctions

The annual 'Spirit of the Holidays' event in Exeter features wine tasting.

The 22nd annual "Spirit of the Holidays," presented by the Exeter Kiwanis Club, will be held Saturday, December 7, from 4-7pm in the Exeter Memorial Building. The event features wine tasting, raffle items, a silent auction and a live Christmas tree auction.

This year's event will showcase more than 50 wines from Napa, Sonoma, Santa Barbara and the Central Coast. Two wines with close ties to Tulare County will also be featured at the event – Locatelli Winery and Clesi Winery in Paso Robles. The Gregory family, owners of Locatelli, have roots in the Visalia community. Christopher Ferrara, the head winemaker at Clesi, is an Exeter Union High School alumnus.

Several of the wines will be available as raffle items. Grand prize raffle items include 12-bottle and 50-bottle wine coolers, and a patio heater. Raffle tickets are $10 for three tickets.

Four trees decorated and donated by four local businesses will be auctioned off at the event. This year's trees were provided by Tricia Kirskey Real Estate, ABC Bookkeeping and Tax Services, Petals & Presents and Golden Valley Citrus. In addition to the Christmas trees, this year's auction will also feature a 2008 Remington Cowboy double-barrel 12-gauge shotgun and a kayak. The Kiwanis Club will also offer a wide variety items, including gifts for Christmas, in the silent auction.

All of the proceeds from the event will benefit Exeter Kiwanis Club's Benevolent Fund, which completes community projects in Exeter. Past projects have included an electronic sign on the highway to announce local events, a mural commemorating local heroes who fought in World War II, and most recently, a contribution toward the purchase of a new scoreboard for the Exeter Union High School Montgomery Aquatics Center.

The Exeter Memorial Building is located at 324 N. Kaweah Ave. on Highway 65 in Exeter. For more information or tickets, contact Event Chair Art Zschau at 592-4134 or artzschau@bankofthesierra.com or any member of the Exeter Kiwanis Club.

THEATER

November 21-23 – The Man Who Came to Dinner
The College of the Sequoias Theatre Department will present The Man Who Came to Dinner. The shows begin at 7:30pm, with a matinee performances scheduled on November 23 at 2pm Tickets are $12, $10 for students and seniors. For tickets, call 730-3907. For information, visit costheatre.org

November 21 – Independent Film Movement Series – 'Three Worlds' – 6pm
This month's selection is "Three Worlds." Al, a young man from a modest background, is ten days away from marrying the daughter of his boss, along with succeeding him as the head of the car dealership. One night, while coming back drunk from his bachelor party, Al commits a hit-and-run when he hits a man by accident. What he does not know is that the entire accident was witnessed from a balcony by a young woman, Juliette, who is going through her own emotional upheavals. French & Moldovan with English subtitles. 101 minutes. Location: Visalia Library Blue Room. For more information, call 713-2703.

November 22-23 – 'A Change of Mind' – 7:30pm
This special theater event is written and directed by George Pearce about a man stranded in the desert who finds salvation from a stranger named Mike. Admission is free. Donations welcomed. The Lindsay Community Theater is located at 190 N. Elmwood, Lindsay. For information, visit lindsaycommunitytheater.com.

November 21-23 – 'Oklahoma!'
The Tulare County Office of Education Theatre Company Fall Musical will be Rogers and Hammerstein's "Oklahoma!" The musical production features some of the best young talent in the county. The show will be open for three days at the L.J. Williams Theater, 1001 Main St., Visalia. For information, contact Brian Roberts at brianr@tcoe.org or call 651-1482.

November 22-24 – 'Love, Loss, and What I Wore'
"Love, Loss, and What I Wore," a series of vignettes about the nostalgic power of women's clothes, will be presented by The Visalia Players at The Ice House Theatre, located at the corner of Race and Santa Fe in Visalia. Evening performances are at 7:30pm on November 22-23 and a matinee will be at 2pm on November 24. For information, visit visaliaplayers.org.

November 29-30 and December 1 – 'Love, Loss, and What I Wore'
See November 22-24 listing.

November 29-30 & December 1-8 – The Best Christmas Pageant Ever
The Enchanted Playhouse will present a hilarious tale of a couple struggling to put on a church Christmas pageant. For information visit, enchantedplayhouse.org.

December

December 6-8 – Love, Loss, and What I Wore
Love, Loss, and What I Wore, a series of vignettes about the nostalgic power of women's clothes, will be presented by The Visalia Players at The Ice House Theatre, located at the corner of Race and Santa Fe in Visalia. Evening performances are at 7:30pm on December 6-7 and a matinee will be at 2pm on December 8. For information, visit visaliaplayers.org.

December 5-8– A Dickens Christmas Carol
Encore Theatre Company presents a comedy adaptation of the holiday classic, A Christmas Carol on December 5-8, December 13-15, December 20-21 at the Encore Theatre, 324 South N Street, Tulare. Advanced tickets available. For information, visit www.tulareencoretheatre.org.

December 12-14 – The Unfinished Christmas Gift – 7:30pm
The Lindsay Community Theater presents The Unfinished Christmas Gift December 12-14 at 190 N. Elmwood, Lindsay. The Unfinished Christmas Gift is the heart-warming story of a young boy, who is forced to live with his grouchy grandfather after the tragic death of his mother in a car accident. For information, visit lindsaycommunitytheater.com.

December 13-15 – A Dickens Christmas Carol
Encore Theatre Company presents a comedy adaptation of the holiday classic A Christmas Carol at the Encore Theatre, 324 South N Street, Tulare. Advance tickets available. For more information, visit www.tulareencoretheatre.org.

ART

November 21 – Clay Cafe Ladies Night 6-10pm
Paint your own pottery, dinner and drinks featured. Cost is $10. For information, visit claycafevisalia.com. Call 733-2022, for reservations.

November 23 – Catholic Women's Guild Holiday Boutique & Craft Show – 9am-6pm
This annual Holiday Boutique/Craft Show will be held at St. Mary's Parish Hall, 506 N. Church St., Visalia. Santa Claus will be there from 1-4pm There will be a variety of vendors. Information, call Carol Yingst at 967-6067 or Irene Mosqueda at 740-8415.

November 24 – Thanksgiving Centerpiece Class – 6:30-8pm
Ramblin' Rose Floral Design Class will be held at 242 Heinlen St., in downtown Lemoore. Cost of $50 to be paid at sign-up. For information, call 924-3863, or visit ramblinroseflorist.net.

November 29 – Main Gallery 'Art for the Holidays' Studio Tour – 10am-5pm
Local artists welcome visitors to their home studios and discuss and demonstrate their work. Information, maingalleryvisalia.com.

November 30 & December 1 – Christmas Craft Show – 10am-4pm
A Christmas Craft Show, featuring Christmas ornaments, decorations, toys, perfume, candles, baked goods, jewelry and more, will be held at the Veteran's Memorial Building, 411 W. D Street, Lemoore. Entry is free. For information, call 924-6767.

December 1 – Exeter Country Craft Fair – 9am-4pm
Tables are still available for Exeter's American Legion Auxiliary Post 94 annual craft show at the Veterans Memorial Building, 324 N. Kaweah, Exeter. Tables are $45. Featured crafts include wooden toys, baby quilts, aprons, birdhouses, jams and jellies, jewelry, handmade soaps, Christmas ornaments, decorations and more. Admission is free. Proceeds support veterans programs throughout the year. For information or to reserve tables, call 592-4311 or 592-2972.

December 1 – Kings Valley Art Center Reception – 12-2:30pm
The Kings Valley Art Center will hold an opening reception for the county-wide K-12 exhibit. Awards will be presented. The exhibit will run from December 1 through December 28. The center is located at 605 N. Douty in Hanford. For information, kingsartcenter.org.

December 4 – Christmas Wreath Class – 6:30-8pm
Ramblin' Rose Floral Design Class will be held at 242 Heinlen St., in downtown Lemoore. Cost of $60 to be paid at sign-up. For information, call 924-3863, or visit ramblinroseflorist.net.

December 4-21 – Annual Holiday Show and Sale.
Arts Visalia will hold its Annual Holiday Show and Sale. For information, visit artsvisalia.org.

December 14 – Christmas at the Gallery – 4:30pm
Exeter Courthouse Gallery of the Arts and Museum will host an art auction, silent auction, fine food, specialty wines, and entertainment. Tickets and raffle tickets are available at the Exeter Chamber (592-2919), Gallery, any board member, or by mail (P.O. Box 253, Exeter, CA 93221).

Tulare County's craft shows offer a great selection for everyone.

Local Craft Shows Offer Unique Gifts for the Holiday Season

CATHERINE DOE

If you are looking for handmade gifts this year, there are local craft fairs happening every weekend, sometimes several on the same day. One of the best reasons to buy at a craft fair is for the superior quality and the uniqueness of the gifts. Why not be the cool gift giver who doesn't go out and buy a toaster but gives the handmade jewelry or locally designed purse?

On the Saturday before Thanksgiving, November 23rd, the Catholic Women's Guild Holiday Boutique and Craft Show will be held 9am to 6pm at St. Mary's Parish Hall, 506 N. Church St., Visalia. The Women's Guild provides cider and cookies while shopping, and Santa Claus will be there for the children from 1-4pm

On Sunday, December 1, the Exeter Country Craft Fair will run from 9am to 4pm at the Exeter Memorial Building on Highway 65. This is a yearly tradition in Exeter with over 60 vendors from all over the Valley. Hand-baked pies and coffee are offered in the morning.

The Holiday Market Place at the Visalia Nazarene Church is one of the more festive craft fairs of the season. The Naz kicks off its event on December 6th, a Friday night, with hors d'oeuvres continually passed around by the younger member of their congregation. Holiday music fills the air and their church is packed with shoppers. Friday is VIP night and worth the $5 to get in. Saturday, December 7th, from 9am to 4pm is free. The church is set back on Caldwell and County Center Dr., and might be difficult to find on a foggy night.

Saturday, December 7th, will see two holiday bazaars in the little town of Lemon Cove. There are only 200 residents, but those residents stay busy with an active Women's Club and one of the best schools in Tulare County, Sequoia Union Elementary. The Lemon Cove Women's Club has holiday crafts for sale along with a holiday luncheon with the same delicious menu they've had for 20 years.

"Nothing moves fast in Lemon Cove," said Pam Lurz. "We just voted on raising the price from $10 to $15, after I don't know how many years."

The Lemon Cove Women's Club has several fundraisers throughout the year and all the money goes to preserving its historic clubhouse. "When you have a building that is 134 years old there is something to fix every five minutes. I don't even want to think about the electrical," said Lurz. The club is currently rebuilding a porch that will be consistent with the home's construction. The event starts at 11am Saturday, December 7th. Reservations are requested. Call Pam Lurz at 597-2436 or Susan Hammond at 597-2459.

Around the corner from the Women's Club Luncheon is the Lemon Cove Holiday Bazaar. This event is put on by the Sequoia Union's Parent Teacher Club and runs Friday, December 6th from 1-4pm and Saturday, December 7th, 9am to 4pm This is a family-friendly event with activities for the kids and gourmet coffee for the adults. Take Highway 198 to Ave 324 and follow the sign to the Lemon Cove Memorial Building.

13th Annual Wine & Chocolate Tasting Set for December 5

Main Street Hanford's 13th Annual Wine & Chocolate Tasting, to be held on Thursday, December 5, from 6pm to 9pm in downtown Hanford, will include 27 downtown businesses extending their hours and inviting everyone to get in the holiday spirit at this popular event.

This year, participants will be able to taste more than 50 different wines, including: Trentadue LaStoria Cabernet Sauvignon, a wine with flavors of blueberries, blackberries and black licorice; Chronic Cellars Dead Nuts Zinfandel, with a slight hint of fresh baked cherry pie; and a Bellini Cocktail with the taste of ripe peaches.

Main Street Hanford has acquired 3,000 chocolates for the event, including chocolates from Sweet Shop, a family-owned producer of handmade chocolates such as Over the Top truffles and Sea Salt Caramel truffles; and Torn Ranch, with sweets such as Pistachio Nut truffles and 24K Gold truffles.

Event tickets are $30 in advance and $35 on the day of the event, and can be purchased at Main Street Hanford, Pro Travel Hanford, Rabobank, Lush Fine Wines and Candice & Co. in Hanford or online at www.mainstreethanford.com. Tickets will be redeemed on the night of the event between 5:45-7pm for a Main Street Hanford wine glass and eight tasting tickets. A map of downtown will guide attendees to various businesses for a variety of fine wines and delectable chocolates.

This event is limited to 1,000 people and sells out every year. For more information, call Main Street Hanford at 582-9457.

The Mighty Oak Chorus performed at last year's event.

"Christmas at the Gallery"
Reception
Saturday December 14th, 2013
from 4:30 pm
Exeter Courthouse Gallery of the Arts & Museum
125 South B Street, Exeter
Art Auction, Silent Auction, Fine Food, Specialty Wines, Entertainment
Oil Painting
24" x 36" framed
by Marty Weekly
"Botanical"
30" x 40" watercolor framed
by Mary Roberts Dungan - 76 Collection
Function and Raffle Tickets available from Exeter Chamber (592-2919),
A La Mode, Exeter Flower Co., by calling 592-5900,
or by mail: P.O. Box 253, Exeter, CA 93221
$40 per person

VISALIA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

The Giving Tree

33RD ANNUAL
CHRISTMAS TREE AUCTION

FRIDAY, DEC 6, 2013
VISALIA CONVENTION CENTER
VIP: 5:30 | GENERAL: 7:30

Over 30 charities benefit from
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VIP party also includes sit down dinner.

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Tulare Host Lions Present Turkey Shoot

The Tulare Host Lions Club's annual Turkey Shoot will be held on Sunday, November 24, on the grounds of the Agri-Center in Tulare. Frozen 12 to 15-lb. turkeys can be won by target shooting (at $3 a round) and in other games.

The shoot starts at 10am and runs until 4pm. All net proceeds will go to vision conservation for Tulare elementary schools, and to the Blind Babies Foundation of Tulare County. For more information, call 688-2740 or 686-6483.

Oklahoma!

Continued from p. 18

Eleanor Roosevelt Community Learning Center, will play Curly. Kaley McConnaughey, a freshman at Redwood High School, will play Laurey.

The cast also features: Aunt Eller played by Julia Galvan, an 8th-grader at Live Oak Middle School; Will Parker played by Owen Webb, a freshman at Redwood High School; Ado Annie played by Hayley Nelson, a freshman at Redwood High School; Ali Hakim played by Javier Camacho, a freshman at Redwood High School; Jud Fry played by Cameron Haley, a junior at Visalia Technical Education Center; and Andrew Carnes played by Alex Werner, a sophomore at Redwood High School.

Performances will be at 7pm on November 21, 22 and 23, at the L.J. Williams Theater in downtown Visalia. A 2pm matinee will also be offered on Saturday, November 23.

General admission tickets are $10 per person and are available at the Tulare County Office of Education, 2637 W. Burrel Ave. Visalia, and Educational Resource Services, 7000 Doe Ave., Suite A, Visalia. Tickets will also be available at the theater box office prior to each performance. For more information, call 651-1482.

Former Visalia Player Wins Cy Young

With his 2013 Cy Young Award victory last week, the Detroit Tigers' Max Scherzer became the second Visalia alumnus in franchise history to win the award. Barry Zito (2002) was the other. Scherzer pitched for Visalia in 2007, and made a rehab start on opening day of 2009, which happened to be the first game of the Rawhide era. (Photo by Ken Weisenberger.)

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